

FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

WEEKLY.

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY, OR, HIS OWN ROUTE TO FORTUNE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

AND OTHER STORIES



When he reached the end of the bridge the frightened horse swerved from his course, brushed down the frail fence, and dashed into the creek. Ed had barely time to spring out of the wagon when the rig struck the water.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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Ed, The Express Boy

OR, HIS OWN ROUTE TO FORTUNE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—How Ed Goes to the Aid of a Sea Nymph.

"Hello, Ed, what are you doing down here at this time in the morning?" asked Bob Sedgwick, looking at his friend, Ed Andrews, in some surprise.

"Watching the bathers," replied Ed, carelessly.

"Watching the bathers, eh? That's something new for you. At this hour you're usually going around taking orders for your uncle."

"Not taking any this morning," said Ed, with a frown.

"I see you're not. What's up? Been having a run-in with the old man again? Must be something serious this time."

"You've hit it, Bob; and it is serious."

"What's the trouble?"

"Mr. White lost or mislaid a pocketbook this morning which he said contained two hundred and fifty dollars. He accused me of taking it."

"Accused you?"

"Yes. He acted as crazy over his loss as the Wild Man of Borneo. He made me go to my room with him and open my trunk so he could search it."

"Did he find his pocketbook in it?" chuckled Bob.

"I should say not; but he found ten dollars I had saved up, and he took it."

"He did! What right had he to do that?"

"No right; but that doesn't make any difference with him. I kicked, of course, and demanded my money back. He refused to return it. He said he believed I had stolen it, a little at a time, from the store till."

"Gee! That's rubbing it in on you. He didn't really mean that, though."

"He acted as if he did. At any rate, he used it as an excuse to freeze on to my savings."

"He's always treated you pretty mean."

"And his wife is as like him as one pea is to another."

"Too bad your real aunt died. She always took your part."

"Yes. She was the only friend I had after my father went West to make his fortune."

"He died out in the wilds without making it, I think you told me."

"Yes. He was doing pretty well, so aunt told me, and used to send Mr. White regular monthly remittances to pay for my clothes and keep; but

he was persuaded to go off prospecting in the Southwest with two or three friends, and the party was caught in a terrible snowstorm somewhere in the mountains of Colorado, and all perished."

Ed always looked very solemn and sad when he spoke of his father or mother, and so Bob changed the subject.

"When your uncle wouldn't give up your ten dollars what did you say to him?"

"I told him flatly that I wouldn't do another stroke of work for him till he gave me back my money."

"He wouldn't return it so you quit and came down here?"

"That's right."

"Going to stay away all day?"

"I'll go back at dinner time and see whether he's changed his mind. It is possible he will have found his pocketbook by that time, in which case I may get my money back."

"S'pose he hasn't found his wallet, and won't give you back your money?"

"I won't go back to work till he returns my funds."

"He might turn the screws on you."

"How?"

"Keep you out of the house till you yield."

"Then I'll take my trunk and leave him for good."

"Where will you go?"

"I don't know."

"He might not let you take your things. You're pretty useful to him, and he won't want to lose you."

"I don't care what he wants. The idea of him charging me with taking his pocketbook when he hasn't got the least bit of evidence against me, and then on top of all, robbing me of my savings, for it is robbery for him to seize what does not belong to him. If he dares to stop me from taking my trunk, if it comes to that, I'll go to the justice and make a complaint against him."

"Well, Ed, if you have to get out, fetch your trunk over to my house. My folks like you, and they'll let you stay with me till you look around."

"Thanks, old man, that's kind of you to invite me, but I hope I will not be obliged to take advantage of your offer."

"Don't fail to do it if matters comes to a crisis with you. I've got to get on now. I've got a message to take over to my aunt. I'll drop in

at the store this afternoon to see if you've gone back to work."

Thus speaking Bob walked off, leaving his friend seated on a low bluff overlooking the broad Atlantic, which at this point curved into the sandy shore with a bold sweep, forming the shallow harbor of Rockhaven that of recent years had come into some local prominence as a summer resort. It was now about ten o'clock, and there were a number of bathers, mostly of the fair sex, gamboling and swimming about in the light surf. There was one in particular who had attracted special notice from Ed. She was a perfect little beauty, both in face and figure, and about sixteen years of age. She was the most graceful little swimmer he had even seen, and she could dive like a porpoise. She was more daring than the others, would go out as far as the end of the life-line, and hang there with her feet beating in the heaving water, apparently enjoying the sensation; but was always immediately recalled by a well-dressed gentleman on the shore, who appeared to be her father. Ed admired her antics greatly, because he was a first-class swimmer himself. He'd have given anything for the honor of her acquaintance, and the privilege of swimming around with her. But she was far removed from his humble sphere in life, for she appeared to be a young lady of some considerable social standing, which indicated that her parents were well off.

At length she came out of the water and stood talking to her father. Evidently he thought she had been in long enough, for he pointed to the bathing-houses and laid his hand on her shoulder, as if urging her to go in and dress. She objected, and danced around him in a frolicsome way. Finally she tagged him and ran toward the bluff on which Ed sat a little distance out from the beach. The gentleman chased her, but stood no chance of overtaking her. The lower part of the bluff was composed of rocks, piled up in a confused line, running out for some distance. At this point there was a dangerous undertow, of which all the bathers had been warned. In addition there was a sign stuck at the foot of the rocks with the word "DANGER" in capital letters. Ignoring the sign the girl began to clamber up the rocks, laughing in high glee at having outwitted her father, and then started to scamper out over them. Her father shouted to her in a tone of great concern.

"Come back, Dora, come back."

She paid no attention, but mounting the highest rock in the bunch made a motion as if she intended diving off it. Ed, knowing the peril of that place, sprang on his feet and shouted to her. She turned around and looked up at him, apparently thinking he had a great nerve to address her. Seeing that she disregarded his call, he hurried further out on the bluff to watch her in case she did jump in.

"Dora, Dora, don't jump," cried her father, anxiously.

The girl apparently wished to tease him, and made another bluff to dive. This time she leaned a little too far over, her shapely foot slipped on the rock, and she pitched downward in an ungraceful way, striking the water awkwardly with a splash, and disappearing under the surface. Her father, in great dismay, rushed up on the rocks, and when he reached the top of them he

saw to his horror his child rise for a moment, without movement, a streak of blood showing across her forehead, where she had grazed a rock under the water. Then she was borne oceanward by a receding wave. Ed saw all that the distracted father did, only plainer, for he was directly above the girl. He perceived that she was unconscious, and that unless a good swimmer went to her aid she would soon be drowned. There was no good swimmer near enough to be of any use but himself. Throwing off his jacket, and kicking off his shoes he dove straight down into the sea, and struck out for the imperiled girl.

CHAPTER II.—In Which Ed Saves the Sea Nymph.

The girl's father was filled with agony. Though no swimmer he was on the point of plunging into the sea after his child when he saw Ed launch himself from the top of the bluff.

"Save her, oh save my Dora!" cried the gentleman, wildly.

Ed didn't hear his appeal. It would not have urged him to greater effort if he had. Already he was cleaving the water like a fish in the wake of the pretty miss. The waves, however, were bearing her out almost as fast as he was going himself, aided by the sweep of the water. Already both were beyond the end of the bluff, and the case looked kind of desperate. It is doubtful if Ed could have saved her had she not recovered consciousness and made some effort herself to keep on the surface. She was in no condition, nor had she the strength to save herself. She saw Ed at last trying to reach her, and began swimming feebly toward him. No one knew better than herself that her hopes lay in him. At last he reached her.

"Don't catch me," he said. "I'll save you."

"I will do as you say," she replied, making no move to grapple him. Seeing that he had a reasonable creature to deal with, Ed felt that half the battle was already won.

"Put your arms around my neck, miss, behind me, and hold on, I'll do the rest," he said.

Dora obeyed, feeling perfect confidence in the brave boy who had come to her rescue. Ed then struck out for the shore, taking long and easy strokes. Dora's father had watched Ed's efforts to save his daughter with mingled hope and anguish. He feared that the boy's plucky efforts would be fruitless. For awhile he had lost sight altogether of his child, and his heart stood still as he pictured her lifeless body floating out to sea. But following the boy's head with his eyes he at last made out Dora's face on the surface of the water only a short way ahead. Then he saw the two heads come together.

"Brave boy! Noble boy!" breathed the agitated father. "He has reached her. And now he is bringing her ashore. No reward will be too great for me to bestow on him for rescuing my darling."

The tide being against Ed, he came on but slowly with his precious burden clinging to his neck. But he took his time, and husbanding his strength, for he needed all his energy in this crisis. He aimed for the end of the bluff, as the nearest point, though the tide ran strong there. The

gentleman made his way there to give him a helping hand when he came within reach. The rocks ran out into the water here, and before he was quite up to the point he felt them underneath. They were too slippery to trust, and the undertow was very strong, so he kept on swimming till he got close in.

"Give me your hand, my brave lad," said the gentleman, reaching out.

Ed, who was well nigh exhausted, did so, and he was dragged out of the water onto the rocks.

"Oh, father, father!" cried Dora, disengaging herself from Ed, and springing into the gentleman's arms. "I am safe."

"Thank heaven, my darling, you are," he replied, straining her to his heart.

Then he turned to Ed, who was leaning, all done up, against one of the rocks.

"Young man, you have saved my daughter's life, and I am very grateful to you," he said.

The boy made no answer. It was too much of an effort for him to open his mouth. The excitement of saving the girl having passed, the reaction had set in and Ed felt as weak as a cat, and looked as white, almost, as the collar he wore. Dora was not near so bad as he. She had been resting during his swim, and felt almost as chipper as when she went overboard. She looked at her preserver, and taking his inert hand in her shapely ones, said:

"You saved my life, and I shall remember you as long as I live."

Then she noticed how fagged out he looked.

"Father, we must help him to the shore. He looks terribly exhausted," she said.

"Thank you, miss, I'll be all right soon," replied Ed, in a whisper.

He sat down on a rock and leaned his head against it.

"Poor boy!" said Dora, sympathetically. "He might have lost his life trying to save me. Run and get some brandy, father; I'll stay with him."

"It isn't necessary," said Ed. "Let me rest awhile and I'll come around. The tide was hard to buck against, that's why I'm so used up."

In a few minutes Ed said he was ready to go on to the beach.

"Before we go tell me your name, my lad," said the gentleman.

"Ed Andrews."

"My name is George West, and this is my daughter Dora. I am glad to reward you handsomely for saving my child."

"I don't want to be paid."

"I'm not going to pay you; I couldn't do that if I tried. But I'm going to make you a present. Here, take this as evidence of what I mean to do for you."

He pressed a roll of bills into Ed's fingers.

"No, sir; I'd rather not take any money from you," objected Ed.

"You must take that. It isn't much. You have ruined your clothing, and you will have to get a new suit."

"These are my old clothes I've got on, and they aren't much. A ten-dollar bill will get me a much better suit."

"Keep the money, anyway. It'll come in handy for you."

The last sentence brought to Ed's mind his rather doubtful situation at his uncle's store, and

the possibility of him being obliged to get out into the world and hoe his own row. It struck him that a little money would come in handy under the circumstances.

"Well, sir, I'll borrow it from you. That's the condition under which I'll accept it," he said.

"Nonsense! I intend to give you a great deal more than that," said Mr. West.

"No, sir; I don't want anything for saving your daughter. It was my duty to do that if I could."

"Let him borrow it, father, if he wants to have it that way," interposed Dora, feeling a strong interest in Ed, and greatly pleased at his delicacy.

She was sure he was a nice boy, and it was a great satisfaction to her to feel that she owed her life to one whose sentiments seemed to be above the common. Mr. West yielded the point, though it was not at all likely that he intended the money should ever be returned to him. The matter having been settled to Ed's satisfaction, he shoved the roll in his pocket, intending to count it later on. The outside bill was a ten-dollar one, and he judged from the size of the wad that it must amount to one hundred dollars. That was a lot of money in his estimation, and he felt rich to have it on his person. The three then walked over the rocks to the beach.

"You'd better go home at once, my boy, and change your clothes," said Mr. West. "Tell me where you live so that I can call on you when I return from Boston."

"I live with my uncle, Abel White. He keeps a general store on Main street."

The gentleman wrote down Mr. White's name and occupation in his memorandum book.

"My wife and daughter are stopping at the Wave Crest Cottage at present. Mrs. West is something of an invalid, and is not able to get around much. She will desire to thank you for the priceless service you have rendered Dora, so you must call there this afternoon if possible," he said.

"I may be busy this afternoon," replied Ed, thinking perhaps he might go back to work if things got straightened out at the store.

"Then call this evening after supper."

"Do," begged Dora. "Won't you?"

To refuse to do anything that so charming a girl as Dora West asked of him was not to be thought of, so Ed agreed to call that evening. Indeed, he was secretly delighted at the idea of visiting the young lady, for she had made a most decided impression on him. It was a pleasure to feel that he had rendered her a great service, for which she was evidently grateful, but he did not expect to see her again after she left Rockhaven and returned to her home. He walked a short distance up the beach with his new friends, and then started for the store to change his clothes, feeling rather dubious about the reception he might receive from his uncle, whose business had suffered considerably through his absence, not to speak of the pocketbook episode.

CHAPTER III.—Ed is Arrested.

Abel White was behind the counter waiting on a customer when Ed looked in at the front door, and there were two other customers standing

around, one of whom was a boy who was sampling a box of dates that the storekeeper had opened that morning and incautiously left exposed within reach of a pilferer. Ed concluded not to face his uncle then, so he went around to the back of the house to reach the stairs that way. He had to pass through the kitchen, and he expected to meet Mrs. White there. She had sharp ears, though no sharper than her tongue, and she knew the step the moment she heard it.

"Where have you been all mornin'?" she demanded acidly, when he stepped into the room where she was preparing the noon meal.

"Down at the shore," replied Ed.

"Oh, you have. For the land's sake, what have you been doin' to yourself? You look as if you'd been in the water."

"I have. I jumped in to save a young lady from drowning."

"You saved her, I s'pose?"

"I did."

"And sp'iled your clothes. What did you leave the store for? Don't you know you had to go out and take the orders?"

"I'd have done it if Mr. White had given me back the ten dollars he took out of my trunk."

"He thinks the money belongs to him."

"He has no right to think any such thing. Did he find his pocketbook?"

"No, he didn't," snapped the woman. "'Peers to me you ought to give that book up. If you don't you'll be put in jail."

"Why, White can't put me in jail without proof that I stole his wallet. As I didn't steal it, I'm not likely to go to the lock-up."

"I thought you was there by this time."

"You did? What made you think that?"

"Because Abel sent for the constable and told him to hunt you up."

"That was a mean thing for Mr. White to do. It shows that he hasn't got much feeling for me, though his first wife was my aunt."

"And ain't I your aunt, too? Though I reckon you ain't no great honor to me. A boy who will steal a pocketbook full of money from his uncle will do wuss," and the speaker glared at Ed.

"So you believe I took it, too?"

"Who else could have taken it but you? Abel accidentally left it in the store this mornin', and there wasn't no one in there but you."

"There were a number of customers."

"They wouldn't take it."

"How do you know one of them wouldn't take it if the temptation was put in his way?"

"They would dare."

"Well, I don't say any of them took it. I'd hate to think that anybody who deals with us is so dishonest. I feel sure that Mr. White mislaid it, and will find it when he looks in the right place."

"Abel knows where he left it, and it wasn't there when he went back for it."

At that moment, Abel White, who had heard Ed's voice through the back door of the store, appeared with a black look on his wrinkled countenance.

"You've got back, eh? Where have you been?" Ed told him.

"Well, I've hired a new boy."

"That's as much as to say that you don't want me any more," said Ed.

"I don't want no thief around my place."

"You have no right to call me one without some evidence."

"You took good care to hide the evidence."

"All right. Since you are determined to condemn me unjustly, I'll take my trunk and leave your house."

"No, you won't take nothin'. And you won't leave, nuther, till the constable takes you away," said the store-keeper, in a determined tone.

"Look here, Mr. White, if you think to ride rough-shod over me you'll find yourself mistaken. I'm going to my room to change my clothes, then I shall pack my trunk. Some time this afternoon I'll send around for it. If you refuse to let it go, I'll lodge a complaint agiinst you with the justice."

"You will, eh?" said the storekeeper, showing his teeth.

"I will. You've sat on my neck for a good many years, but there is a limit to everything. I shall make my own way in the world after this."

"I guess not. You'll go to jail for stealin' my pocket-book. If you want to give it up now before the constable comes, I'll let you off, and you can go to work in the store ag'in, but I'll deduct from your pay the fifty cents I'll have to pay the boy for goin' around for the orders."

"And you'll return that ten dollars you took out of my trunk?"

"I'll think about that."

"I'll wager you'll return it if I have you up before the justice," said Ed.

"How dare you threaten me!" roared the old man, glaring at his nephew.

"I'm only telling you what you may expect if you keep my ten dollars."

"I reckon that money belongs to me. If you're bad enough to steal a pocketbook with two-hundred and fifty dollars in it, you're bad enough to steal from the money drawer. At any rate, I've missed money one time or another."

"I don't believe you ever missed a cent. If you had you'd have kicked like a steer at the time, and everybody in the house would have known about it."

"You remember me speakin' about my missin' change from the till, don't you, Maria?" he said to his wife.

"You never said anything to me about it that I kin remember," replied Mrs. White, who, whatever her faults, wouldn't lie to oblige her husband.

"I reckon your memory must be gettin' bad, Maria," said Mr. White, disappointed because she hadn't backed him up.

"My mem'ry is as good as yours, and mebbe better," retorted his wife, tartly.

"Women ain't got a head as good as a man," snorted the storekeeper.

"I want to know," said Mrs. White, sarcastically.

Ed took advantage of their wordy scrap to slip upstairs to his room.

Neither observed his departure, and they were beginning to have it hot and heavy when a customer entered the store, and Mr. White had to retire from the field to wait on him. Ed removed all his wet clothes, put on dry ones, and was about to count the roll of money he had received from Mr. West, when he heard steps on the stairs.

He returned the money to his pocket, and was in the act of opening his trunk when the door opened and in walked his uncle and Jones, the constable.

"How do you do, Mr. Jones?" said Ed, politely.

"How do you do, Ed? I suppose you know that your uncle charges you with taking his red pocketbook in which he says there was two-hundred and fifty dollars?"

The constable's tone was freindly, for he liked Ed Andrews, and did not believe him capable of theft.

"I ought to know it by this time, Mr. Jones. He ought to be ashamed of himself for accusing me of stealing when he hasn't got proof against me."

"He believes you took his wallet, for he's sworn out a warrant against you, and the justice gave it to me to serve," said the constable.

"Then you've come to arrest me?" said Ed, flushing up.

"That's about the size of it, though I regret that my duty compels me to do it," replied the constable. "You will be examined before the justice this afternoon, and if Mr. White can't show good cause for having you arrested, you can sue him for defamation of your character."

"What's that?" exclaimed the storekeeper, feeling as if somebody had poured cold water down his back. "Sue me?"

"Yes, replied the constable. "You have charged the boy with stealing your pocketbook. You must be able to produce better evidence than your mere belief that he took it, or you are likely to get into trouble if he should take the matter up with a lawyer."

Mr. White was aghast at this unexpected phase of the case.

"I ain't got no real proof ag'in him," he faltered; but I don't know anybody else who could have taken it."

"I have been instructed to tell you to appear against him at two-o'clock or he'll be discharged."

"Mebbe it ain't worth while takin' him in till I get some evidence."

"I've got to execute the warrant."

"I'll withdraw the charge for the present," said the storekeeper, nervously.

"You'll have to go before the justice to do that."

"I can't do that now. I ain't got nobody to tend store. Mrs. White is cookin' dinner and can't leave the kitchen."

"You can do it at two o'clock."

"All right. You needn't arrest my nephew, then."

"I've got to arrest him on the warrant."

"Spouse'n I can't prove he took my pocketbook?" said the old man, evidently it at ease.

"The justice will discharge him."

"Kin sue me, then?"

"That will depend. If you had him arrested unnecessarily——"

"But I'm willin' to wait until I get more evidence."

"Then you've got some evidence against him?"

"I dunno. I found ten dollars in his trunk when I searched it."

"That was money I've been saving up," interposed Ed. "I shall ask the justice to make him give it back to me."

"Hadn't you better search his clothes?" said Mr. White. "He may have the pocketbook on him now. He told me he was goin' to pack his trunk and take it away this afternoon. That looks kind of suspicious."

The constable looked inquiringly at Ed.

"There's nothing suspicious about me taking my trunk away when he told me he had hired a new boy and didn't want a thief around the house. That looks as if I had to move, doesn't it?" said Ed.

"If there's any searching to be done, I'll do it at the lock-up, not here," said the constable.

Ed thought of the roll of bills in his pocket, but he was not worried, for he knew he could account for the money being in his possession.

"I'm ready to go with you, Mr. Jones," he said.

"Come on, then. You will be just in time to dine with me."

So Ed and the officer walked off leisurely together, and though they passed many people on the street who knew Mr. Jones and his vocation, there was nothing in the manner of either that gave them the least suspicion that the boy was a prisoner.

CHAPTER IV.—Ed Is Brought Before the Justice.

The lock-up was next door to Mr. Jones' cottage. It consisted of a small office and three strong rooms with iron doors and barred windows, all on one floor. In the rear of this building was a barn where the constable kept his horse and light wagon.

Jones took his prisoner into his office.

He opened a book that he took from a drawer of his desk. In it he entered Ed's name, address, occupation, the charge against him, the name of his accuser, etc.

"Now," he said, "it's my duty to search you. You may hand me whatever you have in your pockets, and I will put them down in the book."

"Very well," said Ed. "To begin with, here is a roll of money. Count it, please, for I haven't had a chance to do that yet."

The constable looked astonished.

"This isn't the money——"

"My uncle claims he lost? It's my own, and, fortunately, I can prove it. I saved the life of a young lady at the beach this morning, and her father loaned me that money."

"Loaned it to you?"

"He wanted to give it to me, but I wouldn't take it except as a loan. As I didn't know but I'd have to leave the store after the charge my uncle made against me, I thought it would be well to have a little money to fall back on," said Ed.

The constable counted the roll.

"There is two hundred and fifty dollars here—exactly the amount your uncle says was in the pocketbook he lost. Rather singular coincidence, isn't it?" said the officer with a frown.

"I admit that it is, but as long as I can account for it, what's the difference?" replied the boy.

"You say that you saved a young lady's life at the shore, and her father gave or loaned you this money?"

"Yes."

"They are summer visitors, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Where are they stopping?"

"At the Wave Crest Cottage."

"That's one of those tony boarding places down near the shore. What is the gentleman's name?"

"George West, and his daughter's name is Dora."

"Tell me how you saved the young lady," said the constable in a tone of interest.

Ed related the incident.

"By George! That was a plucky thing for you to do. You are evidently a good swimmer or you couldn't have done it."

"I can swim as good as any boy around here, and better than most."

"Well, hand me whatever else you have in your pockets."

Ed did so.

The constable made a note of everything, and then placed them in the safe.

"Now we'll go to dinner."

"I'm glad you didn't search me at my room. Mr. White would have claimed that money as his."

"That wouldn't have made it so, as long as you can satisfactorily account for it."

"He's got ten dollars of mine already. I'm going to ask Justice Smith to order him to return it to me."

"Why did he take it from you—on suspicion that it was part of the two hundred and fifty?"

"No. He took it because he said he believed that I had been robbing his cash drawer of small sums at different times."

The constable whistled.

"He seems to have a hard opinion of you, even if you are his nephew."

He never accused me before of taking any money from him."

"I see. The loss of his pocketbook has kind of soured him against you all of a sudden."

"Looks like it; but he never treated me decently since my aunt, his first wife, died. I've been trying to make up my mind for some time to leave him for good."

"You thought of leaving the village, then?"

"I did, but I've changed my mind since I've got that money."

"Yes?"

"I intend to go into business for myself."

"For yourself, eh? What at?"

"Well, I've got an idea that an express route between this village and Hampden, on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad will pay."

"Then you'd better get a hustle on, Ed, for Buck Norcross—you know Buck—told me he intended going into that business himself."

"Buck Norcross!" cried Ed. "Why, he hasn't any money to go into anything."

"I met him a couple of hours ago, and he told me a friend had loaned him the money he wanted to make a start."

"He got it mighty sudden, then. He was loafing around the store this morning while Mr. White was eating his breakfast, and he told me then he wished he had a hundred dollars so he could go into business. I asked him what kind of business he could go into on a hundred dollars, but he wouldn't tell me. Buck has got such a hard reputation that I can't imagine who would

loan him a hundred dollars on his word, for he hasn't any security to put up."

"Well, I don't know anything about it. He told me he had the money, and was looking around for a horse and wagon."

"Considering that I'm in trouble, he's likely to get ahead of me. There isn't enough in the thing for two to take it up."

"I think you'll have the advantage of him anyway. He'll have a good deal of trouble getting people to trust him with their goods. He's been in jail, you know, and that gives one an awful black eye in a village like this. If I were you I'd go ahead without reference to him. Advertise in the News as soon as you are ready to begin, and make a personal call on all the business houses that are likely to need your services. As soon as you get started I'll speak to people I know and recommend you as an uncommonly smart young fellow to patronize."

"Thank you, Mr. Jones. That's kind of you."

"Don't mention it, and now we'll go into the house and eat."

Ed knew Mrs. Jones well, and she gave him a hearty welcome.

"I suppose you'll be surprised, Mary, when I tell you how it happens that we have the pleasure of Ed's company to-day," said her husband. "The fact is he is under arrest."

"Under arrest!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones, who had quite a high opinion of the boy. "Why, what has he done?"

"It isn't what he's done, but what he's charged with doing that occasions his presence here," replied the constable.

"He isn't accused of killing any one, is he?" laughed Mrs. Jones.

"Hardly. His uncle is the complainant. Mr. White has an idea that Ed stole a pocketbook of his which he alleges contained two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Ed steal a pocketbook! I don't believe it," said Mrs. Jones, energetically.

"Thank you, Mrs. Jones, for your good opinion of me," said Ed, gratefully. "I assure you that I did not steal my uncle's pocketbook. I am sure he must have mislaid it, and will find it before long. Being greatly put out over his loss, he made me the goat because he had to blame somebody. It's been his custom to blame me for everything that has gone wrong at the store, but this is the limit, and I don't mean to give him another chance to sit on my neck."

Ed then told Mrs. Jones about his rescue of Dora West. His enthusiastic description of that young lady's many charms made the constable's wife laugh, and she remarked that she was afraid Ed had lost his heart to the fair water sprite.

"Now, Ed," said the constable, "I'll have to report to Justice Smith that when I searched you according to custom I found two hundred and fifty dollars in your pocket. As that happens to be the exact sum that was in your uncle's pocketbook, I think we had better call on Mr. West, explain the trouble you are in, and get him to come to the justice's office and testify that he gave you that amount of money at the time you saved his daughter from drowning."

"I'm afraid the justice will have to take my

word, as Mr. West went to Boston shortly after I left him and his daughter," replied Ed.

"That's awkward," said the constable, scratching his chin. "When will he return? This evening?"

"I couldn't tell you; but very likely he will, as Boston is not such a great way from here."

"Well, Miss West saw her father give you the money, didn't she?"

"Yes."

"Did he mention the amount at the time?"

"He did not. He just pulled the roll out of his pocket and stuffed it into my hand."

"She could testify to the fact, at any rate."

"She could, but I wouldn't like to ask her to come to the justice's office," said Ed.

"In gratitude of saving her life I should think she'd be glad to do anything that would help you out of the scrape you are in."

"I have no doubt she would, but I feel averse to asking her just the same."

"You must realize that under the circumstances the justice will require that your statement of how you obtained the exact sum of money which your uncle says was in his pocketbook be corroborated."

"That can be done when Mr. West gets back."

"But in the meantime the justice will remand you back to my care until the matter is satisfactorily settled."

"I can't help that, Mr. Jones."

"Well, it's getting on to two now. We'll go over to Mr. Smith's office," said the officer.

Ed's arrest not having got abroad, there was nobody in the justice's office when they arrived there. Abel White turned up at two. He at once showed a disposition to withdraw his complaint.

"What did you make it for if you didn't have sufficient evidence to substantiate it?" demanded Smith. "You don't appear very well disposed toward your nephew, who has been living with you a number of years."

"I reckon he took my pocketbook, but I can't prove it," replied the old man, in an injured tone.

"Has your nephew conducted himself in a way to arouse your suspicions concerning his honesty?"

"I've missed money from my till at odd times, but I never suspicioned he took it," said Mr. White, nervously.

"Then why do you suspect him now?"

"'Cause he was in the store while my pocketbook was there, and when I come to look for it it was gone. Nobody else could have taken it," said the store-keeper, doggedly.

"What have you to say to this charge, young man?" asked the justice, looking at Ed.

"I never saw his pocketbook, and don't know anything about it, sir."

"When did you leave your pocketbook in the store, and where?" asked Smith, turning to Mr. White.

"When I went to breakfast this morning. I left it on my desk at the end of the counter."

"You were in the store when your uncle went to breakfast?" asked the justice of Ed.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "I always stay there when he goes to his meals."

"Were you alone?"

"Part of the time I was. Then some customers came in and I waited on them."

"Do you remember who the customers were?"

"Yes, sir. There was Mr. Whipple, Miss Green and John Persons—that's all except Buck Norcross. He was in there while I was waiting on the customers."

"Buck Norcross, eh?" said the justice, who, in common with the rest of the community, had no great opinion of that individual. "What did he want in the store? Did he come to buy anything?"

He bought a plug of navy tobacco, and then stood around chinning about the hard deal the world was giving him. He said if he could get one hundred dollars things would be different with him."

"He said that?" said the justice, knitting his brows.

"Yes, sir. He said he knew of a business he could put it in and make money."

As Norcross had never shown any great desire to employ his time to good advantage, this statement on his part seemed a bit surprising.

"Hum!" said Justice Smith. "You didn't notice, I suppose, whether Norcross went near your uncle's desk?"

"No, sir; I didn't pay particular attention to his movements while I was waiting on the customers."

"Yes, sir; but he had no business to go near it."

As Buck Norcross' reputation for honesty was not above suspicion, it was clear that the justice had some doubts about that person's movements while he was in Mr. White's store.

"Well, Mr. White, do I understand that you wish to withdraw your charge against your nephew?" he said.

"I reckon I do for the present," replied the storekeeper, reluctantly.

"Before the charge is dismissed, your honor," interposed Constable Jones, "I wish to say that I found the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars in Ed Andrews' pocket."

The justice looked surprised, while Mr. White suddenly brightened up.

"I know he stole my pocketbook," said the storekeeper.

"However, he explained how he got the money," went on the constable.

"How did you get it, young man?" asked Justice Smith.

Ed told his story of the rescue of Dora West, and how Mr. West had given him the money, or, rather, loaned it to him.

"I don't believe no sich yarn," said the storekeeper. "How did he happen to git just the amount that was in my pocketbook?"

"It is a rather remarkable coincidence," admitted the justice; "but if your nephew's statement is true it can easily be corroborated by Mr. West himself. Where is he stopping?"

"At the Wave Crest Cottage, with his wife and daughter; but he went to Boston this morning after I saved his daughter," said Ed.

"Humph!" exclaimed the store-keeper.

"He'll return this afternoon, late, I suppose?" said the justice.

"I suppose so," replied Ed.

"Under the circumstances I will continue this examination until to-morrow, and parole the accused in the custody of the constable, unless you,

are still disposed to withdraw the complaint," said the justice to Mr. White.

"I reckon I won't withdraw it now," said the storekeeper. "I know'd the truth would come out. Maria said——"

"That will do, Mr. White," said Smith, abruptly. "The case is continued. Mr. Jones, you will be responsible for the production of the young man to-morrow. You and he had better call at Wave Crest Cottage this evening and see Mr. West. The court is adjourned."

CHAPTER V.—Ed is Discharged from Custody.

Ed had supper that evening with the constable and his wife, and soon afterward he and Mr. Jones started for Wave Crest Cottage. They found Mr. West, his wife and daughter on the veranda in company with other guests. As soon as Dora saw Ed she jumped up and came forward to greet him.

"I'm so glad you called," she said. "We were looking for you."

"Miss West, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Jones, the village constable," said Ed.

The young lady said she was glad to know Mr. Jones, but to say the truth she would have much preferred that Ed had come alone.

"Come now, Mr. Andrews, I want to introduce you to my mother. She is very desirous of meeting you, as she wishes to thank you for saving me from a watery grave," said Dora.

Accordingly Ed was introduced to Mrs. West, who didn't look very strong. The lady hastened to express her gratitude in feeling terms. Ed then introduced the constable to Mr. and Mrs. West. Mr. West after that introduced Ed to the other guests, who had heard about Dora's narrow escape, and were curious to see her plucky rescuer. As soon as politeness would permit, Ed told Mr. West that he would like to see him privately for a few minutes.

"Certainly," said the gentleman, and with the constable they walked down to the gate, but not before Dora had said that Ed must not go away without seeing her again.

"Mr. West," began the boy, "I'm in a bit of trouble, and you can help me out."

"Trouble!" exclaimed the gentleman. "I'm sorry to hear that; but if I can help you out of it you may depend on me doing it."

Ed then told him how his uncle had had him arrested on the charge of stealing his pocketbook, which he averred contained two hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. West expressed his surprise the announcement caused him.

"My uncle has no evidence against me, and the charge would have been dismissed by the justice but for the fact that the roll of money you gave me this morning was found on me when I was searched by the constable. All I want you to do is corroborate my statement that you gave me two hundred and fifty dollars this morning."

"I will willingly testify that I gave you a sum of money amounting to something over two hundred dollars, but I do not remember the exact amount that was in the roll," replied Mr. West.

"As long as you are sure it amounted to more than two hundred dollars, sir," said Constable

Jones, "I think that will cover the ground. Ed bears a first-class reputation in the village, and I for one don't believe him guilty of taking his uncle's pocketbook. It was a singular coincidence that the money you gave him should tally with the sum that Mr. White asserts that he lost. But for that fact Justice Smith would have discharged him, for there was no real evidence against him. The justice desired that I should call with Ed and see you this evening in order that you might call at his office in the morning and substantiate Ed's story."

"I will do so with pleasure," said Mr. West. "At what hour?"

"As you may wish to take the boat for Boston in the morning, which leaves at nine, I can arrange with the justice to meet you at eight."

"Very well. Where is his office?"

"Three blocks up Main street, on the other side. Anybody will show you."

"I will be there at eight o'clock."

"All right, sir. Now, Ed, I'll leave you here and call at Justice Smith's house on my way home. You'll sleep at my house to-night, so try and get there not later than half-past ten," said the constable.

"I'll be there by that time, Mr. Jones," replied Ed.

The constable took his departure, and Ed and Mr. West returned to the veranda, where the boy passed a pleasant evening, chiefly in Dora's society. The young lady seemed quite taken with Ed, and they got on swimmingly together. He said, if it was possible, he'd be at the beach in the morning about ten to go in bathing with her. She said she'd be delighted to have his company, for he was such a good swimmer that she'd feel quite safe with him. Ed then wished her and her parents good-night, and took his way to Constable Jones' cottage.

Mr. West called at the office of Justice Smith next morning and convinced that gentleman that Ed had come by the two hundred and fifty dollars in a perfectly legitimate way. The constable was present at the interview, and the justice told him to bring Ed around at two o'clock, when Abel White would be on hand. The officer returned home and gave the boy permission to put in his time as it suited him, but to be back at the cottage at half-past twelve for dinner. Ed shortly afterward started for West Crest Cottage. Dora was waiting for him, and they went to the beach together, Ed promising Mrs. West that he would look out for her daughter in the water. The young people spent an hour in their bathing suits and enjoyed themselves hugely. Ed taught Dora a few new wrinkles in the swimming line, and she declared that it was a first-class treat to have him with her. She wanted him to take her down in the afternoon, but he told her he had some business on hand, and she would have to excuse him. After dinner Constable Jones and Ed went to the office of the justice, and found Abel White waiting.

"Have you secured any further evidence against your nephew?" asked Smith.

"I reckon I don't need any more. My money was found on him," replied the store-keeper.

"You are in error, Mr. White. That money rightfully belongs to Andrews," said the justice.

"How does it?" snorted Abel White, in great

surprise. "Where would he git two hundred and fifty dollars, just the amount that was in the pocketbook?"

"You heard the explanation yesterday."

"That was nothin' but a cock-and-bull story."

"On the contrary it was quite true. The gentleman who presented him with the money called here and fully corroborated his story."

"Huh!" grunted the store-keeper.

"As there is no evidence on which to hold the prisoner, I shall discharge him from custody," said the justice, writing the word "Discharged" across the complaint.

Mr. White looked thoroughly disgusted. He was still more disgruntled when Ed told the justice that his uncle had taken ten dollars of his money from his trunk, when he searched it the previous morning on suspicion that his pocketbook was hidden in it, and refused to give it back to him.

"As I'm not going back to live with Mr. White any more, I hope you will order my uncle to return me the ten dollars," concluded Ed.

Justice Smith questioned the store-keeper about the money, and Mr. White had to admit that he had no real right to the ten dollars.

"Very well, then I direct you to return it to your nephew at once."

"I hain't got no ten dollars with me," protested the old man.

"Then give it to him when he calls on you and demands it."

That closed the proceedings. Outside Mr. White tried to make up with Ed, for he didn't want to lost his services, as the boy was much more valuable to him, and cheaper, than any other boy he could get to take his place. Ed, however, had made up his mind to quit him, and wouldn't listen to his proposals. His uncle had laid the last straw on his back when he accused him without proof of stealing his old red pocketbook, and had him arrested. The boy had his mind made up to start his own route to fortune, and now that he had capital enough to make a start he proposed to lose no time getting on the job.

"I'll give you another dollar a week," said Abel White, as a temptation to alter his determination, though he hated to yield up to that extent.

"No, sir, I wouldn't work for you again at any price," replied Ed, resolutely.

"It ain't Christian-like to bear a grudge ag'in your uncle," almost whined the store-keeper.

"I don't hold any grudge against you. I am simply through with you."

"You're down on me 'cause I had you arrested. I'll allow that I acted a leetle too quick. Somebody stole my pocketbook, and I thought it was you, seein' as you was in the store at the time. If you leave me you'll put me in a hole."

"I can't help that. I didn't start this trouble. If you hadn't accused me of stealing your pocketbook, and then taken my ten dollars, I should be still working for you. Now you'll have to get another assistant, for I'm going into business for myself."

"Eh? Goin' into business for yourself? What are you goin' to do?" asked the old man curiously.

"I will send you my business card after I get started, and you can patronize me if you think it is to your interest," replied Ed.

"Huh!" exclaimed Abel White.

"It is time that I did something worth while, since my future depends on myself."

"You'll make ducks and drakes of that money the gentleman gave you for savin' his darter. Better give it to me and let me keep it for you till you git of age."

"Don't you worry about what will happen to that money. I expect to return it to the gentleman out of the profits of my business."

"Huh!" ejaculated the store-keeper again. "So you don't mean to return to the store?"

"No, sir. I will call at the house this afternoon or to-morrow for my traps and the ten dollars you owe me, plus half a week's wages. As you may be busy in the store, you better leave the money with you wife to give me."

"Huh!" said Abel White for the third time.

"Now good-by. I've got business to attend to, and cannot talk to you any longer," concluded Ed, nodding to his uncle and walking off.

CHAPTER VI.—Ed Gets Ready for Business.

The first thing Ed did was to call at the house of his friend Bob Sedgwick. Bob was something of a carpenter, and had a little shop fitted up in the loft of the barn. Instead of going around to the back door and asking for Bob, Ed went straight to the barn. He expected to find Bob in his shop, and he was not disappointed.

"Hello, Ed. You haven't made up with your uncle yet, eh?" said Bob, judging from Ed's presence at his house at that time of the day.

"No. I've quit him for good," replied his friend.

"That so? As you didn't come around yesterday with your trunk, I thought maybe you'd patched things up."

He went the limit this time, and I'm through with him. What do you suppose he did?"

"I couldn't guess," replied Bob, laying down the hammer and looking at Ed.

"He had me arrested on the charge of stealing his pocketbook."

"Go on; you don't mean that," almost gasped Bob in surprise.

"I do mean it. I spent last night at Constable Jones' house."

"Well, your uncle is meaner than dirt. However, you got off all right or you wouldn't be here now."

"Yes, Justice Smith discharged me for want of evidence. I'd got off yesterday afternoon but for the fact that two hundred and fifty dollars, the exact sum that my uncle claimed was in his lost pocketbook, was found in my pocket by the constable."

"Two hundred and fifty dollars! How came all that money in your pocket?" asked Bob, clearly astonished.

"I put it there."

"You did."

"Yes. The money belonged to me."

"Where did you get it?"

"A gentleman by the name of West, a summer visitor from Boston, loaned it to me for saving his daughter from drowning at the beach yesterday morning soon after you left me."

"Is that a fact?" said Bob in surprise.

"It is," and Ed proceeded to relate the incident in question to Bob.

"Gee! You're all right, Ed. So you made two hundred and fifty dollars by saving the girl?"

"No. I only borrowed the money. Mr. West wanted to give it to me, but I wouldn't have it that way. I don't believe in taking pay for saving a person's life. Life is one thing that's above financial consideration. Mr. West no doubt considers his daughter of more importance than all he's worth. He couldn't really pay me for the service I rendered him, so why should I accept such a sum as two hundred and fifty dollars?"

"I suppose you borrowed the money to see you through in case you broke with your uncle altogether?"

"I borrowed it with an eye to business. I'm going to start an express route from here to Hampden."

"Do you mean that?"

"I certainly do. I've been figuring on the matter for some time, though I had little expectation of ever realizing my idea, because I saw no way of securing the capital to start with. Now that I've got hold of all the money I need, I'm going to begin business right away."

"I wish I could go in with you, but that's out of the question."

"There's only a living for one in it to start with; but I hope to build it up into a money-making venture."

"I suppose you mean to make regular daily trips to Hampden and back in a wagon, carrying trunks and merchandise back and forth?"

"That's the idea. It's a wonder to me that no such route has been established before, for it would be a great convenience to this place, particularly when the summer boat from Boston has stopped running. During the season most everything is brought down on her, but she only makes one round trip a day, leaving here at nine and Boston at four. It takes her three hours. Now the stage that runs between this place and Hampden carries, besides her passengers, only the mail and express matter and baggage. Often the latter has to be brought here on a special team, when there's a rush of visitors. The store-keepers have had to get all their stuff down by boat, or send specially to Hampden for it if they order it from the city by rail. So you see there's a good opening for a regular express business between here and Hampden, and if I don't tackle it somebody else will pretty soon."

"I guess you can do well at it. You're strong and used to work," said Bob.

"I mean to push it for all it's worth."

"Where are you going to live—here or in Hampden?"

"I shall live here, and makes two trips a day."

"Two trips? That's going some. Do you think you can keep that up?"

"Why not? I guess a good horse can stand it, and if he can, I'll hold up my end. My idea is to leave here at seven in the morning so as to connect with the train that reaches Hampden at nine from Boston. I expect to be able to leave Hampden at half-past nine, and get back at twelve. Then I'll start on my second trip about three, so as to meet the five o'clock train. That will bring me back here about eight in the evening."

"That looks like work."

"Well, I'm not going into this thing for amusement."

"I don't see how you'll be able to make a double trip in the winter. I might do it occasionally, then, if the conditions admitted of it, and I had enough business to warrant it."

"You'll have to have two horses, won't you? One for the morning trip and one for the afternoon trip. One horse would soon give out, I should think."

"Yes, I guess I will."

"Then you'll have to have a stable to put them in, and a place for your wagon. I'll ask my father if you can use our barn. It's plenty big enough to accommodate you, and you could board with us, too. How would that suit you?"

"First rate. I'm willing to pay for the use of a part of your barn, and whatever your folks think is right for board and lodging."

"You can bunk in with me, and my mother won't charge you much."

"Well, find out whether it will be convenient to your mother to have me, and ask your father about the rent of the stable."

"I'll ask my mother now, and my father when he gets home after business," said Bob. "Nothing like doing things up quick."

Accordingly, Bob left the loft and went to the house. He was back in about ten minutes.

"My mother says you can stop with us," he said. "She said there won't be any difficulty about you getting the use of the barn either if you stop with us."

"I'm glad to hear it. I was afraid I might have some trouble finding a stable to suit me. The horses and the wagon will be safe here, and so will any stuff that I may have to hold over night."

"Are you going to have an office where orders can be left?" asked Bob.

"Sure. I'll have to. I'll get desk room in some store on Main street."

"Where are you going now?"

"To look up a couple of good strong animals. The wagon I'll have to buy in Hampden."

"You'll start up as soon as you get your team?"

"Of course. I'm not going to let the grass grow under my feet."

"Well, we eat about six. I'll look for you at supper time. How about your trunk?"

"I'll go for it to-morrow, probably."

Ed went away to look up the two horses he needed in his business. In the course of an hour he had found what he wanted and bought them, leaving orders for them to be taken to Bob's house. Then he purchased some feed for them and had that sent, too. The next thing he did was to visit the office of the Rockhaven Weekly News and order 500 business cards. He furnished the following copy:

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY,

OFFICE: TIM FLYNN'S FEED AND GRAIN STORE,
MAIN STREET,

Is prepared to carry trunks and small packages of merchandise between Rockhaven and Hampden at reasonable rates.

Two trips daily, connecting with the 9 A. M. and 5 P. M. trains from Boston.

Prompt service guaranteed.

GIVE ME A TRIAL.

ED ANDREWS,
Proprietor.

Then he made out the following advertisement to be inserted in the next and succeeding issues of the paper:

NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!
NEW EXPRESS ROUTE BETWEEN ROCK-
HAVEN AND HAMPDEN.

TWO ROUND TRIPS DAILY.

Connecting with the 9 A. M., and 5 P. M. trains from Boston. Trunks and small packages of merchandise carried at reasonable rates. Prompt service and satisfaction guaranteed.

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY,

OFFICE: TIM FLYNN'S FEED AND GRAIN STORE,
MAIN STREET.

By this time it was after five o'clock, so Ed returned to Bob Sedgwick's house, and found his friend reading on the veranda waiting for him to show up. He told Bob what he had done, and Bob told him that the horses and the feed had both arrived and were in the barn.

"I'll take the stage in the morning and go to Hampden to look up a suitable wagon," said Ed. "I guess I can find what I want there."

"You're a hustler, all right, Ed," said Bob. "Another chap, after working as steadily as you have for so long at White's store, would take a lay off for awhile before jumping into such a strenuous business as an express route."

"Can't afford such a luxury at present. Besides, Mr. Jones told me that Buck Norcross told him that he was going into the same scheme as I've taken up with, and it won't do to let Norcross get the start of me. I want to be the first in the field, and then maybe Norcross will change his mind."

"Did Buck really say he was going into the express business?"

"He told Mr. Jones that he was."

"Where is he going to get the money to open up with? He hasn't got a cent."

"I believe he's found a backer."

"Anybody who loans him money has my sympathy, for the chances are he'll never get it back."

At that moment the bell rang for supper and the boys went in.

CHAPTER VII.—Business Rivals.

That evening Ed paid another visit to Wave Crest Cottage. He received a cordial greeting from Mr. and Mrs. West, and a warm one from Dora. He told them about his plans for the future, and Mr. West thought the express route an excellent idea.

"You ought to do well at it," he said, "for you'll have the field to yourself, and in my opinion such a route is much needed by the business people of this village. If you need any

money, don't fail to tell me, and I'll let you have it."

"I guess I have plenty. If the wagon costs more than I have figured on, I dare say I can get time on a portion of the price."

"Better let me loan you another hundred, for that seems to be the only way you'll accept money from me," said the gentleman.

After some talk Ed agreed to borrow one hundred dollars more, and he got it.

"When do you expect to start in?" asked Mr. West.

"On Monday morning. I don't believe I'll be in shape before then."

"Will you take me with you on your first trip?" asked Dora. "I'll be your mascot. It's a good idea to have one, for then you're sure to succeed."

"Why, you wouldn't ride on a light wagon, would you, to Hampden?"

"I would with you," she replied sweetly.

"It is very kind of you to say so, but as I shall start out at seven in the morning, you are not likely to be up at that hour."

"I'll get up in time to go with you on your first trip, even if you started at daylight," she said.

"Well, if your father and mother are willing you should go, I'll take you and feel delighted at the honor."

"Very well. I shall hold you to your word. You'll call for me on Monday morning at seven o'clock?"

"Yes. You'll get back here about noon."

That matter being settled, they began talking about something else. Ed went to Hampden next morning on the stage, found just the wagon he wanted, and bought it. He also purchased the harness he needed. He got back to Rockhaven about seven o'clock and found that Mrs. Sedgwick had kept his supper warm in the oven. Next morning was Saturday, and taking one of his horses he rode to Hampden, harnessed him to the wagon and got back to the village in time for dinner. Then he and Bob drove to Mr. White's store. He packed his trunk and loaded it on the wagon. He entered the store and asked his uncle for the ten dollars and two days' wages. The old man handed him the money very grudgingly.

"When are you goin' in business, and what are you goin' to do?" asked the store-keeper.

"I'm going to start on Monday. There's my business card."

"The express business, eh?" said the old man, in surprise. "I reckon you won't make nothin' out of it. Buck Norcross was in here awhile ago and said he was going to start an express route to Hampden. I promised to patronize him, for he said he wouldn't charge me much. You won't stand no show ag'in him, for he's a man, while you're only a boy. People won't have confidence in you."

"Do you think they'll have any confidence in him?" asked Ed.

"Why not?"

"You know what his reputation is in the village."

"He isn't so bad as he's painted, I guess."

"Maybe not; but when a fellow has been in jail for stealing——"

"You was in jail, too, wasn't you?"

"No, I wasn't. I stopped with Mr. Jones at his house. I wouldn't have been arrested but for you. It's lucky for you I wasn't put in the lock-up, or I might have sued for false imprisonment and got damages. Did you find your pocket-book yet?"

"No, I haven't. If you didn't take it, somebody else did, and is spendin' my money. Who did you tell the justice was in my store that mornin'?"

Ed mentioned the persons, winding up with Buck Norcross.

"I don't believe none of them would take it. Besides, how could they with you there?"

"Buck is the only one I'd suspect of doing such a thing," said Ed.

"Why would you suspect him?"

"Because he isn't to be trusted."

"Well, you didn't see him near by desk, did you?"

"I can't say that I did, though he hung around that end of the room while I was waiting on Mr. Whipple. He was talking to me when the store was empty. He said if he had a hundred dollars he'd go into business and make money. A couple of hours later he met Mr. Jones and told him that some friend of his had loaned him the money he wanted to go into the express business. If I was you I'd try to find out where Buck got the money so soon. You might find some connection between it and your missing pocketbook."

The old man looked a bit startled.

"Do you really think he took my pocketbook?" he asked.

"I don't say he took it. I only say that it's funny how he got the money he wanted so soon."

Having spoken his suspicions, Ed bade his uncle good-by and drove away with Bob, leaving Abel White in a reflective mood. Ed spent the rest of the day visiting the business people of Rockhaven, soliciting customers for his express route, leaving his card in each place. A good many people had also seen his advertisement in the News, which was published that morning. Among the number was Buck Norcross. That individual was rather disconcerted when he read it. He knew that Ed had left the store rather suddenly, and supposed he intended to quit the village. When he saw that the boy had embarked in the very business he had in view, he was somewhat staggered. He swore some under his breath, for though he did not regard Ed as a dangerous rival on account of his youth, still there was a possibility that the boy might hurt him at the start.

"He must have got some money out of his uncle," he muttered. "I wonder how he came to take up with the express business? I didn't say nothin' about it to him. Well, he's only a boy. He won't be able to make it go. As soon as I get started I'll do him right up. People would rather have a man like me take charge of their stuff than an eighteen-year-old kid. What does he know about the express business anyway? Goin' to make two trips a day, too. He can't do it with no horse that steps on two feet. That shows what a lobster he is. I can see his finish right now. I ought to have put an advertisement in the paper, too, though I ain't ready for business yet. Well, I'll do it next Saturday. I'll put in a bigger advertisement than his, and have it

printed on the same page. I'll begin it this way: 'Buck Norcross' Express. The only reliable institution of its kind in Rockhaven. Beware of imitators that promise to do a lot and perform nothin.' Norcross' express will carry anythin' at bottom rock prices. One trial will prove that Buck Norcross' knows his business from the ground floor up.' That ought to squelch Ed Andrews and put his express route on the bum."

Ed was on his way home, as he now called Bob's house, when he saw Norcross in front of the Rockhaven House talking to one of the habitués of the billiard and pool room. Buck saw him, too, and hailed him when he was on the point of passing.

"Say, you've got a nerve, Ed Andrews," he said in a grouchy tone.

"What's troubling you, Buck?" asked Ed, who had a pretty shrewd notion that Norcross wanted to say something about his business announcement in the News.

"Nothin' is troublin' me, but I guess somethin' will be troublin' you afore long," replied the man, pointedly.

"What do you refer to?"

"You put an advertisement in to-day's News statin' that you intend to carry on an express business 'tween here and Hampden."

"What if I did? Anything wrong in that?"

"I s'pose you think you can do it?"

"Yes, I think I can make a success of it."

"What do you know about runnin' an express route? You're only a store boy," sneered Norcross.

"That's one of my business secrets."

"It's my opinion you won't last more'n a week."

"I'm sorry you have such a poor opinion of my abilities."

"I ain't sayin' nothin' ag'in your abilities as a store boy. I reckon you're smart as any boy at that. But you have a nerve thinkin' you can run an express route."

"Suppose I have, you're not particularly interested, are you, whether I make a success or failure of my venture?"

"Look here, Ed Andrews, what put it into your head to take up with the express business?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm goin' into the business myself, and there isn't enough in it for two."

"If you think that, you'd better stay out of it, then," said Ed, calmly.

"Why, confound your impudence! I thought of the business first, and you ain't got no right to try and cut me out of it," roared Norcross, angrily.

"How do you know you thought of it first?"

"I know I did. Didn't I tell you the other mornin' at the store that I was goin' into it?"

"No; you never mentioned the express business. You said if you had a hundred dollars you'd go into business and make money."

"Well, I meant the express business."

"How could I tell what you meant? I'm not a mind reader."

"I must have let somethin' out that put you on to it."

"No, you didn't give me the slightest hint of what you wanted the hundred dollars for."

"Then how came you to think of the same thing?"

"I've been thinking about the scheme for more than six months back."

"You never said nothin' to me about it when I came into the store."

"It isn't necessary for me to tell people what I'm thinking about."

"Well, you're a fool to take up with that business, for as soon as I start in myself there won't be nothin' for you to do."

"I'll take the chances of that. When do you expect to start?"

"That's my business," grunted Norcross.

"You'd better begin soon, Buck," laughed Ed, "or I'll have everything in sight, and then it won't be worth your while getting in on the job."

"That so?" sneered Norcross. "You'll find the boot on the other leg."

"If I do, I'll sell out to you," chuckled Ed, who then walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.—Ed's Successful Start.

Ed's express route had been favorably commented on by the editor of the News, who referred to his advertisement in another part of the paper, and said that his project would fill a long-felt want. Before the boy met Buck Norcross he had called upon a dozen or more business men in the village, handed them his card, and told them that on and after the following Monday he would be prepared to carry between Rockhaven and Hampden any package of merchandise, not too heavy to handle in a light wagon, at reasonable rates.

He received many promises of encouragement in his enterprise, for most of the store-keepers were glad to have a daily express route established between Hampden and the village. In one store a farmer, who was making some purchases, asked him what he'd charge to carry three barrels of potatoes from his farm, along the road he would traverse, to a Hampden grocery store.

"Twenty-five cents a barrel," replied Ed.

"Well, you can call on your way Monday morning and get them," said the farmer, telling him where his place was. "I'm pretty busy harvesting now, and I can't afford to send a team to town with those potatoes."

"All right, sir," replied Ed, registering his first order.

"You might as well take a box of goods for me that Mr. Hickey," that was the name of the farmer, "has just bought," said the storekeeper. "It will be right on your way. How much will you charge me?"

"How big is the box?" asked Ed.

The store-keeper told him.

"It will cost you a quarter, Mr. Pratt."

"All right. When do you leave Monday morning?"

"Seven o'clock. Can I get the box at that hour? If not, I'll call for it tonight."

"The store is open at seven."

"All right, sir. I'll call a few minutes before that time," said Ed. "Well, I've got a dollar's worth of business to commence with," thought the young expressman, as he walked out of Pratt's grocery store. "I expected that I would

not have anything to take on my first trip. A dollar isn't much, but it's better than nothing. Besides, it shows that I've made a real start."

Before Ed reached the Sedgwick house he picked up two more commissions, amounting to nearly another dollar, to take to Hampden. At the supper table he told about his encounter with Buck Norcross.

"Buck is sore because you've gone into the business that he picked out," laughed Bob. "He expected to enjoy a monopoly, and now you'll cut into his profits. You'd better keep your eyes skinned, for he's just the chap to play you some dirty trick to get even with you."

"I don't see what he can do. He will probably run me down to the merchants when he goes around soliciting business, but I don't think his talk will carry far."

"He can't hurt you that way. He'll try to do it, of course, but you needn't mind that. What I mean is he'll try to work off some scaly, underhand job on you, hoping to put you out of business. He isn't to be trusted, so you want to keep your weather eye lifting all the time."

"I'll keep a watch out for him."

"If I was you I'd insure the wagon and horses. They represent the bulk of your invested capital. It won't pay you to take any chances," said Bob.

Ed thought his friend's suggestion good, and said he would adopt it. Next morning when Ed woke up the rain was pattering heavily on the roof. That fact reminded him that he would have to buy a waterproof garment to protect himself against a possible rain storm. He would also need an oiled covering to protect the goods he was carrying under the like circumstances. It also struck him that he would need a couple of lamps, but there was no immediate hurry to get them.

"It's cost me over the original two hundred and fifty dollars so far to fit myself out; I wonder how Buck Norcross expects to start on one hundred. It wouldn't greatly surprise me to learn that he is the party who got away with my uncle's pocketbook, and the two hundred and fifty that was in it. I tipped Mr. White off to the possibility of it, now it's up to him to try and find out whether there is any truth in it."

The weather cleared during the afternoon, and Ed went over to Wave Crest Cottage. He took Bob with him and introduced him to Dora. Bob was quite struck with the girl's good looks and piquant manners. The three took a walk together along the beach, which was pretty well populated with afternoon bathers. They decided to take a dip themselves.

"I won't get another chance till next Sunday," said Ed.

They spent half an hour in the water, Ed and Dora swimming out beyond the end of the life-line. Bob didn't dare venture out so far, and waited impatiently for them to return.

"Suppose you caught a cramp out there, Ed, you'd be in a nice pickle," he said.

"It would be the first time I caught such a thing, then," replied Ed.

"There's always got to be a first time to everything."

"Miss West would probably have been able to support me back as far as the end of the life-line," said Ed.

"I'd have done it," said Dora, with a confident look.

Shortly afterward they left the water and dressed themselves.

"I'll call for you shortly after seven in the morning," said Ed, after they had escorted the girl back to the cottage. "I hope you will be up and ready for your ride."

"I'll be ready. Mrs. Buller has promised to have breakfast ready for me at half-past six, and one of the maids said she'll wake me at six."

"All right. It's up to you. I'll be on hand unless the weather is not suitable for the trip."

"I hope it doesn't rain like it did this morning, for I should be greatly disappointed if I missed going on your first trip to Hampden," said Dora.

"She's a mighty pretty girl," remarked Bob on their way back to the house.

"That's right, she is," returned Ed.

"You made a ten-strike when you saved her. Only for that wouldn't have got your start in the express business."

"That's true, too."

"How long shall she and her folks stay here?"

"Till the first week in September, I believe."

"Where does she live—in Boston?"

"Yes."

"You might get an invitation to visit at her home later on."

"I'm afraid I couldn't accept on account of my business."

"You might hire somebody to carry on the route for a week."

Ed shook his head.

"I could not afford to take any chances with my bread and butter even for the pleasure of visiting such a nice girl as Dora West."

"I guess you're right, Ed. It a fellow doesn't look after his business, his business won't look after him," said Bob, opening the gate.

They went to the barn to feed the horses, and when this duty had been attended to they went into the house to supper. Ed was out of bed at half-past five next mornin, and found that the morning was a lovely one for his trip. He took that as a favorable augury, and anticipated an enjoyable ride with Dora. He had the wagon all ready standing in the yard when Bob's mother called him at half-past six to a light breakfast of coffee and rolls.

Fifteen minutes later he was on his way to Pratt's grocery store to take on the box of groceries he was to deliver at the Hickey farm, where he had to call for three barrels of potatoes. Ten minutes after seven he drove up to Wave Crest Cottage and found Dora on the veranda waiting for him.

"You're looking lovely this morning, Miss Dora," he gallantly said as he helped her to mount to the seat.

"Thank you for the compliment," she answered blushing. "Isn't it a delightful morning?"

Ed admitted that it was, and off they started.

"I'm not starting out empty-handed after all," he said, pointing to the box and bundles in the wagon.

"That's good," she said.

"And I have an order to take on three barrels of potatoes further on," he continued.

"Better still," she laughed. "My father said he felt sure you would succeed in this venture of

yours. He said you had the pluck and energy to make your fortune in time."

"I'm glad he has so good an opinion of me."

"I am sure you deserve it," she replied. "When I return to Boston you must write to me frequently and let me know how you are getting along. You know I take a great deal of interest in your success. I promise to answer your letters promptly, though I suppose they won't be as interesting as yours will be to me."

"Anything you write is sure to be interesting to me," he said earnestly.

"You said that very nice," she answered with a blush. "You may change your opinion after you have receive one or two of my poor attempts at correspondence."

"No. My opinion will never change except for the better."

Dora thought Ed remarkably gallant for a country boy. They conversed on various topics until the Hickey farm was reached, when Ed turned in at the long lane and drove up to the yard.

He delivered the box of groceries, taking a receipt for the same from the farmer, who helped him load on the three barrels of potatoes.

Then he resumed his route, and they reached Hampden just as the Boston morning train was coming in. Ed drove up to the station, though he had nothing in prospect. He wanted to hand the agent a few of his cards to tack up around the station. The stage was on hand taking on the mail bag and a number of express packages that had come down by the train.

There were several passengers also bound for Rockhaven.

The stage had also brought three or four gentlemen who wanted to go to Boston by the train that stopped thirty minutes later, which would reach the city ahead of the boat from Rockhaven. While Ed was waiting to see the agent the driver and proprietor of the stage put everything on his vehicle but a large and heavy express package, which he declared he couldn't take.

"You'll have to send that on by somebody else," he said to the express agent. "I can't handle that nohow."

"Can't you load it on behind with the trunks?" asked the agent.

"No, I can't. It's too heavy for the track. I wouldn't chance it."

"All right; but your contract holds you. If you can't carry it you'll have to pay somebody to do it for you."

"I'll lose money on that thing."

"That's your funeral, not mine," replied the agent.

"I'll take it to Rockhaven for you, Mr. Owens," said Ed. "Here's my card. I'm in the express business now myself."

"Hello, Ed. I remember I saw your advertisement in the paper Saturday. How much will you charge me?"

"Fifty cents."

"All right. Where's your wagon?"

"Yonder."

"Fetch it up and I'll help you put it on."

Ed brought his wagon up to the platform and the box was soon on.

"Deliver it at the express office when you get back. How soon are you going?"

"As soon as I make three deliveries."

"Good. I often have freight cases here that I can't take. I'll have you help me out."

"Thank you, Mr. Owens. Every little helps."

"Sometimes there are more trunks than I can take. You can give me a lift with them, too. When I have to hire a man to make a special trip I lose money. You will come in handy for me, as you intend to run the route regularly."

Owens handed Ed half a dollar, and, mounting his seat, started off.

Ed then interviewed the station agent, and that man promised to put anything in his way that came along. Ed delivered his bundles and the potatoes in town, and started on the return trip, reaching Rockhaven about noon.

"Thank you very much for the ride," said Dora, as she alighted at the cottage.

"I thank you very much for the pleasure of your company. Good-by."

He drove around to the express office, left the case, and then went home for his dinner, well satisfied with the start of his own route to fortune.

CHAPTER IX.—In Trouble.

After dinner Ed went to Flynn's store to see if any orders had been left. He found two letters from store-keepers asking him to call. He did so. They had nothing for him to do, but wanted to know his rates and have a talk with him. They had customers along the road to Hampden, and it was a loss to them often to send their wagons out that way. Ed made a special arrangement with them to carry all their out-of-town deliveries. He drove around the village to places he had not yet visited, and caught on to a couple of bundles for town. There was no special need for him to meet the Boston train that afternoon, but he thought he had better keep to his schedule anyway. He reached Hampden at five minutes to five, and found that the train had met with an accident and would be half an hour late. He delivered his packages and returned to the station.

Soon afterward the train rolled in. The stage was waiting, of course. There was a bunch of people for the village, and an over-plus of trunks. Owens turned four over to Ed, who agreed to take them for a quarter each. There was a big package of merchandise which had come down by freight. The agent hunted up Ed and told him he had been instructed by telephone to hand it over to him. Ed slapped it on his wagon and followed after the coach. On the way he figured up the results of his first day's work and found that the his receipts amounted to \$4.75.

"That's a whole lot better than I expected for my first day," he thought; "but I hope I'll do better to-morrow."

Several days passed and Ed did pretty well. He knew it would take time for his route to become a recognized institution. As soon as the business people of Rockhaven got used to the route he would begin to make money. So far he heard nothing from the opposition express line. Apparently Buck Norcross was taking his time

in getting started. Buck had purchased his horse and wagon, but he soon found that hardly anybody offered him any encouragement. He was given to understand that the route put into operation by Ed, the Express Boy, filled the bill.

"He makes two regular trips a day," said a man he had approached for custom. "You only propose to make one, and you do not claim to make train connections. We don't need two express routes in the village, anyway."

"He's only a boy, and is liable to bust up any moment," replied Buck.

"When he busts up you can call around and I'll talk to you," said the man, who distrusted Norcross on account of his unsavory reputation, and didn't want to do any business with him.

On the second day Buck got one small package to take to town, and he looked at it in disgust.

"It doesn't pay to make the trip for a measly quarter," he said. "I won't take it till I get something else."

Buck got nothing else that day and he didn't make the trip. Next morning he offered to carry a trunk for a quarter. As this was half what Owens charged on his stage, he got the commission. So Norcross made his first trip with a fifty-cent load, and he was far from pleased, particularly as he knew Ed had carried a big load that morning.

"I'll have to pickle him," he muttered. "He's got the bulge on me somehow, and I've got to do him or he'll do me."

All the way to Hampden he turned various plans over in his mind for putting his young rival out of business, but none of them seemed safe enough to pull off. As he neared the town the stage passed him, and Owens, who knew him well, eyed him curiously, wondering who he was driving the wagon for. He had not heard that Norcross was starting an express route of his own. Half a mile further on he met Ed, with a number of packages in his wagon. He nodded curtly to the boy and kept on. He was unable to scare up anything to bring back, so after spending an hour in a saloon, drinking up the proceeds of his first trip, he started back, feeling that the world was giving him a rough deal. There was a bridge spanning a wide but shallow creek about a mile outside of Rockhaven. As Norcross rattled across it an idea suddenly popped into his head. He grinned malevolently.

"If it works it will do Mister Ed up in great shape," he muttered.

He kept on to the village and looked up no more business that day. Next day was Saturday, and marked the end of a successful first week for Ed. Business was increasing, as new customers employed him, and the old ones expressed their satisfaction over his prompt and capable way of doing business. When he left Rockhaven with a load, he had a copy of the News in his pocket. As he drove along after the stage he opened it and glanced over its columns. The following item among the locals struck his attention:

"We are pleased to learn that 'Ed, the Express Boy,' is doing very well with the route he established on Monday. We know Ed, and it always was our opinion that he was the smartest boy in the village. He has taken hold of the express business with a vim, and is pushing it for all it

is worth. We can recommend him to any one wishing the services of an expressman as efficient and trustworthy. His advt. will be found on the opposite page."

"I must cut that out and show it to Miss Dora," thought Ed.

Further down in the local column he spied the following:

"Buck Norcross has purchased a horse and wagon and gone into the express business between this village and Hampden. His advt., calling attention to the fact, is printed on the opposite page. Buck says he will guarantee satisfaction to all who favor him with their patronage. Give him a trial."

Ed grinned as he read the item.

"Buck has only made one trip in three days," he said to himself, "and then he wasn't overloaded. I'm afraid he isn't hustling very hard. He'll have to do better than that if he hopes to make a living out of the business."

By this time the stage had disappeared in the distance and Ed had the road to himself. A mile further on he came up with a farmer's light wagon that was stranded. The axle had broken and the farmer was trying to repair damages. A trunk stood beside the road, and on it were seated a neatly dressed woman and a little girl. They had been rustivating with the farmer for a couple of weeks and were on their way to get the 9.30 train for Boston, but under the circumstances the chances of them reaching the station at Hampden in time was not over brilliant.

"Whoa," cried Ed, reining in his horse. "Can I be of any service to you, sir?" said Ed, addressing the farmer.

"I dunno. This here axle is broke short off, and I calculate I'll have to take the waggin to the blacksmith. Are you goin' to Hampden?"

"Yes."

"If you'll take this lady, her little girl and the trunk to the station, I'll give you half a dollar."

"All right. I'm in the express business, and I'm going right to the station now to meet the down Boston train," said Ed, getting down.

He assisted the lady and the little girl on to the seat, the farmer helped him with the trunk, and he started on again with an unexpected half dollar in his pocket.

"It is very fortunate that you came along," said the lady. "I should have missed the train for Boston, and would have had to wait in Hampden for two or three hours for the next one that stops there. My husband expects us up by the morning train, and will be at the depot to meet us."

"I'll get you to the station in plenty of time," replied Ed.

He found the lady a very pleasant person to chat with, and the time passed quickly away. The down train was just in when they reached the railroad. Ed helped the lady check her trunk and then bade her good-by.

"I've got one trunk too many," said Owens, as Ed came up to where the stage stood. "You'd better take charge of it. Deliver it at the Grapevine cottage."

Ed nodded, and as soon as it was in his wagon he started into town to make some deliveries. He got one package to carry back. Then he started on his return to the village. Everything

went merrily with him till he drew near the bridge we mentioned. Then a big red object, with a hissing stem, came through the air and dropped into the road. Before Ed could rein in it exploded with a loud report that proved it was a giant firecracker. His horse shied to one side and then started on at headlong speed. When he reached the end of the bridge the frightened horse swerved from his course, brushed down the frail fence and dashed into the creek. Ed had barely time to spring out of the wagon when the rig struck the water.

CHAPTER X.—The Forked Tongue of Gossip.

There were three persons standing on the bridge at the time, and they witnessed the accident. The horse dashed across the creek, dragging the wagon after him, which fortunately, did not turn over, the weight of the trunk probably having something to do with this. The package had bounced out when Ed jumped. The cool water and the trouble of hauling the vehicle across the stream, which was not more than four feet deep at this point, took the speed out of the animal, and two of the spectators ran down and easily captured him, leading him up the bank to the road. Ed picked up the package and hastily crossed the bridge.

"I'm much obliged to you for catching my horse," he said to the two men. "It is mighty lucky for me that the wagon was not smashed and the trunk dumped into the creek. That would have put me in a nice fix. I wonder who threw that big firecracker into the road? He must have known it would startle any horse that faced it. Looks to me as if it was done intentionally. Of course, some boy did it. No man would have been guilty of such a trick."

"I don't know about that," replied one of the men. "I saw a man skulking into the bushes a little while ago, and he had a round red object under his arm. I didn't notice what it was, but since the explosion, I believe it was the firecracker that set your horse off."

"Did you see the man's face?" asked Ed.

"Not very clearly, but I think I'd know him if I saw him again."

"Describe him as well as you can."

The man did so. It struck Ed that the description fitted Buck Norcross pretty well.

"I wonder if that rascal played that dirty trick on me?" he thought. "If he did, and I could prove it, I'd make it mighty hot for him."

He looked his rig over and was greatly pleased to find that it had suffered no injury whatever.

"That was a fortunate escape I had," he thought as he drove on. "If Buck did that he's the meanest rascal on earth."

He hadn't gone far before he saw a horse and light wagon standing off the road up a lane. The animal was tied to the rail fence.

"That looks like Buck's rig," he said.

He reined in, got down and entered the lane. After looking the rig over he couldn't swear that it was Buck's, though he believed it was.

He made a note of it for future reference. Then he drove on and reached the village without further incident. He delivered the trunk and the

package, and then went to dinner. At the table he related the accident that had happened to him.

"That was Buck Norcross' work, I'll bet a hat," said Bob. "I told you he'd play some nasty trick on you if you didn't look out."

"He can consider himself lucky that I haven't any real evidence against him, or there'd be something doing he wouldn't like," replied Ed.

As he was starting out on his afternoon trip he overtook Norcross driving in the same direction with a load of empty fruit crates he was taking out to a farm. He had secured the commission through the purser of the steamboat.

Dick looked at his wagon sharply and saw it was the identical one he had seen up the lane near the bridge. He was now convinced of Buck's connection with the outrage. But his convictions wouldn't do his rival any harm, so far as bringing him to justice. It served, however, to put him on his guard against a repetition of his enemy's tactics.

"Hello, Ed," grinned Buck. "I reckon I've got a bigger load than you this trip."

"I see you have. Got any more big firecrackers in your pocket?"

"Firecrackers!" returned Buck, with a guilty flush. "What would I be doin' with firecrackers?"

"If you don't know I can't tell you," replied Ed, driving on.

"Looks as if he suspected me," thought Buck. "Well, I don't care. He ain't got no proof that I done anythin'. Too bad the trick missed fire. I don't know how his horse went across the crick without doin' any damage to the wagon. I thought the rig was goin' to smash. That would have put him out of business and given me a chance to pick up his customers. Well, the thing failed, so I'll have to try somethin' else. I've got to bust his route up somehow, or he'll come out on the top of the heap, and that wouldn't suit me at all."

Buck delivered his load of crates and received his pay. He didn't go on to Hampden as he had no prospects of making anything by doing so, so he returned to the village and put his rig up. Then he went to the hotel and lounged into the billiard-room. An old crony of his was playing pool at one of the tables, and Buck nodded to him. After a while the man quit playing and seated himself beside Norcross.

"How are things coming? Doing much with your express route?" he asked.

"Not a great deal yet, but I look to see business pick up next week," replied Buck. "It takes time to establish a new business."

"How about that chap who started in the same biz—Ed, the Express Boy, he calls himself? He's bound to hurt you."

Buck uttered an imprecation.

"I'd like to do him up. What right had he to start opposition to me?"

"Oh, this is a free country, that's why," laughed the other.

"It's too blamed free. Boys oughtn't to be allowed to butt in where they're not wanted."

"He used to work for old Abel White, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"White is his uncle, I think?"

"He is."

"How came he to cut loose from the old man?"

"How should I know? Maybe it was because the old duffer thought he stole his pocketbook with a bunch of money in it."

"Did White lose a pocketbook with money in it?"

"He did."

"How much money?"

"He didn't tell anybody, or the news would be about the village. How did you learn about it? Did he tell you?"

"Oh, I heard about it," replied Buck, evasively.

"Say, maybe that's how the boy got the capital to start the express route."

"I wouldn't be surprised," acquiesced Norcross, the idea striking him that it would hurt Ed if the news got about that he was suspected of stealing money from his uncle to go into business with. "It costs money to buy a horse and wagon. I know it cost me more'n two hundred for mine."

"It did, eh? Where did you get the spondulix, Buck? I never knew you to be in funds before. How did you make the raise?" asked his crony curiously.

"Don't you worry about how I got it," growled Norcross, uneasily. "I borrowed it."

"Borrowed two hundred or more, eh? Where did you find the good friend?"

"Never you mind where I found him."

"Expect to pay him back out of your profits?" chuckled the other, who hadn't much confidence in Buck's integrity.

"Of course I expect to pay him back. Do you s'pose he'd lend it to me if I hadn't promised to return it?"

"It's easy enough to promise," grinned his companion. "So Abel White lost a pocketbook with a wad in it, and you think his nephew swiped it?"

"I didn't say he did; but him startin' in business right after looks kind of suspicious. Where would a kid like him get two hundred and fifty dollars to buy a horse and wagon?"

"Maybe his uncle loaned it to him."

"If you knew Abel White as well as I do you'd know he didn't do no such thing. He wouldn't lend anybody ten dollars. He's an old skinflint."

"I don't suppose anybody else would lend the boy so much money."

"People ain't lendin' money to kids who ain't responsible."

"Then he must have pinched that pocketbook. It's a wonder White hasn't made a big fuss over it, and taken the horse and wagon away from the boy."

"That's his business. It wouldn't do for me to say anythin' about Ed stealin' his uncle's pocketbook, for people would say I was jealous of him because he was runnin' an express route in opposition to me; but if you was to hint around about the matter it would set folks talkin'. That would give him a black eye, customers would lose confidence in him, and then I'd get 'em. That would give me a lift, see?"

"I see what you're getting at. Well, if it's any favor to you I'll mention the matter here and there."

"That's right. It'll be a favor. Me and you are good friends, and if you help me along I won't forget it," said Buck. "Come over to the bar and have a drink."

Norcross' crony, whose name was Ira Bunker, accompanied him with alacrity. They had several drinks for which Buck paid, and then they went outside.

Before dark Bunker had told a number of persons that Abel White had lost a pocketbook containing over two hundred dollars, and he hinted that the store-keeper's nephew might have taken it in order to get the funds to start his express route.

Nobody in the village had bothered themselves about how Ed secured his capital until Bunker began circulating his insinuations, then they began to wonder if there wasn't some truth in the suggestion, for two hundred or more dollars was a lot of money for a store boy to have, especially when it was now remembered Abel White had represented him to be a kind of charity boy he had adopted into his family out of the goodness of his heart.

In a small village like Rockhaven, news of any kind circulates fast. Reputations are torn to shreds in short order on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Half of the inhabitants had lots of idle moments, and they were unhappy unless their tongues were on the wag at those times.

By the time that Ed was eating his supper with the Sedgwicks, in happy unconsciousness of what Dame Rumor was saying about him, a great many of the villagers were talking about the pocketbook that Abel White was reported to have lost, and wondering why the news had not been printed in the paper that morning. The general opinion seemed to be that the store-keeper was keeping his loss quiet in consideration for his nephew. In the course of several hours Ira Bunker's statement, with its added insinuations, had developed amazingly, so much so, indeed, that he would scarcely have recognized it as his original version.

The fact that Ed had been able to invest two or three hundred dollars in an express route lent almost positive confirmation to the prevailing suspicion that he was guilty of stealing his uncle's missing pocketbook.

Store-keepers who had begun to patronize the hustling young express boy heard the unsavory gossip and began to wonder if there was any truth in it. Some of them looked askance at Ed that evening when he went around picking up commissions for Monday morning. No whisper of what was going on reached the boy's ears, however, and he arrived home still ignorant that any scandal had attached itself to his name.

CHAPTER XI.—The Man at the Barn.

Next morning Ed went to see Dora, and Bob went with him again. The young expressman reported the results of his first week to the Wests, and Mr. West said he had done fully as well as could be expected.

"In fact, you have done better than I thought you would," said the gentleman. "Rome wasn't built in a day, neither can a business be put on its feet in a week. It's the hustler who succeeds these days, and I guess you have no lack of energy."

Dora and the boys went bathing, and then Ed

and Bob went home to dinner. That afternoon Ed paid another trip to the Wave Crest Cottage, but he went alone, and had Dora all to himself, which suited both of them very much. He was invited to stay to tea, and did. In the dusk of the evening he and the girl went off for a walk.

So interested were they in one another's society that they walked further than Ed had intended, and as it was getting late he took a short cut through a patch of woods with the young lady.

Dora finally declared that she was tired and suggested that they sit down for a few minutes if they could find a suitable spot. They soon came to a fallen trunk under the shade of a sweeping tree and took possession of it. Pretty soon they heard the voices of two men who were approaching them. Ed recognized the tones of one as belonging to Buck Norcross. He told Dora to remain silent till they had passed. The men came up and stopped within earshot.

"How much are you going to give me to bring you that quart of gasoline, Buck?" said Norcross' companion.

"I'll give you half a dollar for it. That will pay you, for it ain't worth more'n ten cents," replied Buck.

"What are you going to do with it to-night?"

"I'm going to use it on my wagon."

"Never heard of anybody using gasoline on a wagon."

"There are lots of things you never heard of," growled Buck.

"I'll allow there is. Say, have you heard what's going around about Ed Andrews?"

"What?"

"They say he stole a pocketbook from his uncle containing several hundred dollars, and used the money to start his express business."

"I wouldn't be surprised if he did. He must have got the money somehow," replied Buck.

"I never thought he'd do anything like that," said the other. "He always had a good reputation."

"That's because he never had a chance to steal anythin' before."

"It ain't proved yet that he stole any money. Seems to me his uncle would have had him arrested if he had pinched as much as people say."

"I guess Abel White doesn't want to expose him."

"I don't know about that. I've known Abel a long time, and I ain't heard him speak any too well of his nephew. It's my opinion there ain't nothing in that story. Abel White thinks more of a dollar than most people do of ten. If he lost a pocketbook containing any money at all, let alone several hundred, he'd have made such a fuss that the whole village would have heard about it."

"Well, he lost his pocketbook, and there was two hundred and fifty dollars in it," said Buck, in a positive tone.

"Did he tell you about it?"

"Maybe he did, and maybe he didn't."

"You speak as if you knew it was a fact."

"It is a fact."

"Did he say that Ed Andrews took it?"

"I ain't sayin' whether he did or not."

"He must have told somebody or the yarn wouldn't have got around."

"Maybe he did"

"If Ed took that money, which seems to me doubtful, and put it into the express business, he got away with it more than a week ago. It's funny nobody knew anything about it until last evening. Things generally get around when they happen."

"Abel White hushed it up."

"If he did, how did you know about it? Maybe you started the story."

"Me! What would I do that for?"

"You might be sore on Ed because he's got ahead of you in the express."

"What's he's doin' isn't worryin' me any. I ain't really started yet. When I get goin' there won't be nothin' for him to do."

"Don't be so sure about that. He's a smart boy. Nobody but a hustler would undertake to make two daily trips to Hampden and back. If you'd started in first, you might have got the bulge on him, but now you'll have uphill work trying to run him out. If I was going to bet on which of you two was likely to win out, I'd put money on him."

"Then you'd lose," snarled Norcross.

"I don't think I would."

"You wait and see. If he ain't out of business afore next Sunday I don't know what I'm talkin' about."

"Maybe you expect to do him some way."

"No, I ain't goin' to touch him. I don't want to go to jail."

"Once was enough for you, wasn't it?" chuckled the other.

"You needn't bring that up. I wasn't guilty."

"That's what they all say. The constable found the goods on you, Buck."

"It was a mistake."

"Yes, I suppose it was," replied his companion, in an incredulous tone.

"There ain't no need to talk about it now. Let's move on. Don't forget to bring that gasoline over to my house as soon as you can."

"I'll do it," said the man, whom Ed had already recognized as a small storekeeper named Abbott, who dealt in bicycle and automobile supplies, as a side line.

The men parted, Norcross going in the direction Ed and Dora had come, while the storekeeper turned off by a side path.

"You heard what those men said," remarked Ed to Dora when they were once more alone.

"Yes. It's a shame to think any one would accuse you of stealing a pocketbook with money in it," replied the girl, indignantly.

"I'm afraid Mr. White couldn't keep his loss a secret any longer, and has let it out. He must have insinuated his suspicions concerning me, for he can't get it out of his crop that I took his property, though he knows well enough that the money I used to start my route was advanced to me by your father."

"As an uncle he seemed to be very small potatoes," said Dora.

"Now you have an idea what kind of man my business rival, Buck Norcross, is. Do you wonder that I feel convinced he threw that fire-cracker which frightened my horse yesterday and nearly wrecked my outfit?"

"I do not."

"I also believe he is the person who stole my

uncle's pocketbook, for he was in the store at the time Mr. White says it disappeared. He hadn't a cent to his name then, and two hours later he confided to the constable the information that he had borrowed enough money to start his contemplated express route."

"I think he's a dangerous man. You heard him say that if you were not out of business by next Sunday he didn't know what he was talking about. I'm afraid he intends to do something to injure you."

"It certainly looks that way. I shall keep a sharp watch on him, for he isn't to be trusted. If you've rested long enough we'll proceed."

They reached Wave Crest Cottage fifteen minutes later. Ed remained half an hour on the veranda talking with Dora, and then bade her good-night. The clock pointed at half-past ten when he got home. He went to his room and found Bob in bed and asleep. It was a bright moonlight night, with a light wind, which rustled the branches of the big oak outside the window. He leisurely undressed without a light, and then instead of turning in sat down beside the open window, for it was a pretty warm night. His thoughts were divided between his express route and the fair Dora. He could not conceal from himself that he thought a great deal of the girl. All girls he had ever known paled beside her charms. She was his beau-ideal of a young lady, and he wondered if she would ever be more to him than she was now. He was afraid not, and while mooning over her he fell asleep. He awoke with a start and heard the clock downstairs striking the midnight hour.

"I have been sleeping in this chair more than an hour. I'd better turn in," he said, looking casually from the window.

The window faced upon the yard with the barn at the back. His glance took in both yard and barn. He saw a man with a can in his hand and a bundle under his arm, just disappearing around the corner of the barn. Ed was wide awake in a moment. The man's presence on the Sedgwick property at that hour looked decidedly suspicious.

"I'll have to go down and see what he's up to. It can't be anything good," he ejaculated.

Hurriedly dressing himself he stole downstairs, let himself out through the back door, and softly walked over to the barn. Going to the corner he glanced cautiously around, but saw no one in sight.

"He must be at the back, unless he mounted the fence and made his way over to the next street. He might have done that, though I don't see any reason for him making a thoroughfare of this property," thought Ed.

He slipped along the side of the barn and took a look. The stranger was on his knees before an opening he had evidently made in the rear of the building. There was a pile of shavings beside him on which he was pouring the contents of the tin can. Putting down the can he began shoving the treated shavings in through the hole.

"Here, what in thunder are you doing?" cried Ed, starting forward.

The stranger turned a startled look upon the boy. Then it was that Ed recognized him as Buck Norcross.

CHAPTER XII.—The Crime That Failed.

"Buck Norcross, what are you doing?" cried Ed.

The man sprang to his feet with an imprecation, snatched up the almost empty can and flung it at the boy's head. Then he turned, sprang over the back fence, and fled as fast as his legs would carry him. Ed dodged the can and rushed to the fence. He saw that it was useless to attempt to overtake the man if he wished to do it, which was doubtful. He knew the fugitive was Norcross, and that answered all purposes. He went to the hole, picked up a handful of shavings and smelt them. The odor of gasoline was strong upon them. He put his arm through the opening and pulled out a handful of the shavings. There was quite a pile of them inside. Norcross' purpose was evident. He had meant to set fire to the barn, and his object was to destroy Ed's two horses and his wagon that were housed inside. Had his plan succeeded, another horse, belonging to Mr. Sedgwick, would, in all probability, have lost its life, while a buggy, and much other property, would have been destroyed in common with Ed's possessions.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Ed. He's worse than I ever thought he was. I must bring Bob down here right away before anything is disturbed, and show him the peril he were up against."

He hurried back to his room, aroused Bob, told him to dress and come down to the rear of the barn.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the astonished Bob.

"Do as I tell you and you'll find out," replied Ed, darting out of the door without further explanation, and returning to the barn.

Bob, convinced that something very serious had happened, lost no time in getting into his clothes and making for the back of the barn. He found Ed waiting for him. Bob had entertained the idea that he would see a dead body stretched out on the ground, but on his arrival nothing like that appeared to be around.

"What's the trouble, Ed?"

"See that hole and that pile of shavings?" said Ed.

"Put your arm through the hole and see what you feel."

Bob did so and pulled out a handful of shavings.

"Smell them," said Ed.

"Phew! What's on them?"

"Gasoline, one of the most inflammable of liquids."

"Was somebody trying to set fire to our barn?" asked Bob, waking up to the situation.

"You've guessed it. I caught him at it not a moment too soon. Guess who the rascal was."

"I couldn't. Did you recognize him?"

"I did. It was Buck Norcross."

"You don't mean it," gasped Bob.

"I do mean it."

"He saw you and made his escape?"

"Yes. He flew over that fence and ran toward the next street. He's probably some distance from here by this time."

"If you can swear that it was he we will have

him arrested. This is a mighty serious matter. Mr. Buck is liable to get ten years for this attempted crime. If his plan had gone through, your horses and ours would have been burned, not speaking of your wagon, our buggy, a lot of other property, and the barn itself. Even our house would have been threatened with destruction. Buck has settled his own hash this time."

"Will you go and bring Constable Jones here, or shall I?"

"I'll go if you want me to."

"Then chase yourself. I'll stay here and watch."

Bob hurried off to get the constable. He was gone three-quarters of an hour, and he brought Mr. Jones back with him. The constable had secured all the particulars from Bob, and was quite prepared for the evidence of attempted arson Ed had to show him.

"It's clear case that a fire-bug has been at work here," said Jones. "Bob told me that you came upon the rascal suddenly and recognized him as Buck Norcross."

"Yes, it was Buck all right. I can answer to that."

"Well, in the morning you must call on Justice Smith and swear out a warrant against him. I'll take it and hunt the man up."

The shavings were removed to a hole in the ground and set on fire. Bob got a board, and a hammer and nails, and closed up the hole in the wall of the barn. The constable took charge of the can, which still contained perhaps half a pint of gasoline, to use as evidence. Ed then told about the interview that he and Dora West had overheard between Norcross and Abbott, the storekeeper, that evening in the wood.

"You'd better call on Abbott first thing in the morning, and you'll find that he will admit supplying Buck with a quart of gasoline tonight. He didn't suppose Norcross wanted it for any bad purpose. I heard him ask Buck what he was going to do with it, and that rascal said he wanted it for his wagon," said Ed.

"I'll call on Abbott," said the constable, who then took his leave, while Ed and Bob returned to their room and went to bed.

Of course, Bob's father and mother heard the particulars in the morning with no little consternation, and agreed that it was an act of Providence which had enabled Ed to frustrate the rascally design. Ed had to give up his morning trip to Hampden. After breakfast he went to Justice Smith's house and told that gentleman all the particulars. Together they went to the office of the justice, and Ed swore out the warrant charging Buck Norcross with attempted arson. The warrant was handed to the constable to serve. Jones had already called on Abbott, and that man confirmed Ed's statement that he had sold Norcross a quart of gasoline the night before.

"I did it as a particular favor, for I don't, as a rule, sell anything on Sunday," said Abbott. "What's wrong about it?"

"Nothing wrong about your part of the business, but Norcross used the gasoline for a bad purpose."

"What did he do?"

"You'll learn later," replied the officer, walking away.

When Ed left on his afternoon trip, with a big load, Norcross had not yet been arrested, as far as he knew. Constable Jones had visited the cottage, where he lived with his married sister, and failed to find him there. He searched his room, and among other things discovered a faded red pocketbook which bore the name of Abel White.

"So he was the thief who stole this from the storekeeper and got Ed into trouble," muttered the officer.

He examined the pocketbook, but there appeared to be nothing in it now. It was clear that Norcross had used the two hundred and fifty dollars it had contained. Jones put it in his safe when he got back to his office, intending to restore it to Mr. White, with an explanation of how it came into his possession. Then he started off again to try and find Buck. In the meantime Ed went on to town, made his deliveries, collected several big packages at the station, and came back, arriving half an hour later than usual. Long before that the whole village had heard about Buck Norcross' attempt to fire the Sedgwick barn in order to put Ed, the Express Boy, out of business. No great surprise was expressed that Buck should do such a thing. His reputation was bad, and those who knew him well believed him capable of any crooked piece of work. Constable Jones had been unable to find him up to nightfall, so the general conclusion was that he had skipped for parts unknown. His horse and wagon were in the stable where he kept them, and were likely to remain there indefinitely. Thus Ed was relieved of a rival in his business, though the boy had not regarded Buck as a dangerous factor, for the man seemed utterly unsuited to engage in any occupation requiring push and energy. At supper Bob told Ed that he had called on Dora that afternoon and told her about Norcross' attempt on the barn.

"What did she say?" asked Ed.

"She said it was most fortunate that you happened to wake up in time to see the rascal and defeat his purpose."

"You can bet it was. I'd have been in a pretty bad hole if my horses and the wagon had been destroyed. I guess Buck has played his last card against me. If he knows when he's well off he'll get out of the State, for he's sure to get a stiff sentence if he's caught and brought to trial."

Buck's desperate act so overshadowed the gossip about Ed that the latter was lost sight of in the shuffle, and nothing more was said about Abel White' stolen pocketbook. Ed continued to have plenty to do during his second week, and his receipts were three times as large as what he took in the first week. Altogether, the new express route was getting on swimmingly, though Ed found the hours long and the work hard.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Accident at the Bridge.

Another week elapse and summer was drawing to a close. Ed felt sorry for this, as it meant the near departure of the Wests for their Boston home, and the withdrawal of Dora from his society. Nothing had been heard from Buck Norcross, so it was believed that he had left the

county for his own good, and probable the State. We have spoken about the bridge which spanned the creek at the point where Buck Norcross had made a dastardly but futile effort to bring Ed's express business to a smash-up. This bridge had been built a good many years, but having been well constructed, had stood the test of time and the heavy weight of the stage coach which traversed it twice a day in both directions for a long time. One afternoon, just at dusk, the stage was returning to Rockhaven as usual after making connection with the five o'clock Boston train. Owen carried no passengers or trunks on this trip, for few people were coming to the village at this end of the season—the exodus from the village summer cottages having already set in. There was nobody on the seat but Owens himself, and in the compartment behind his legs was the express box and the mail bag. He had taken his time this afternoon, which enabled Ed, following on behind him with a fair load, to almost catch up with his single horse.

"Get up, old nag," chirruped Ed to his horse; "don't you smell oats waiting for you in the barn?"

At that moment, through the calm evening air, came a crashing sound, followed by a shout, which the boy seemed to recognize as Owen's voice.

"Something has happened to the stage," thought Ed.

Before coming in sight of the bridge, Ed caught a view of the creek ahead where it swept around in a semi-circular turn, and he saw, through the gloom, a sailboat, with three persons in the cockpit, scooting over the water away from the place where the bridge crossed. A few moments later Ed reached the bridge and reined in because he couldn't cross. The far end of the bridge on one side was hanging down at an angle. When the bridge dropped the stage had been flung against the railing, which, not being intended to withstand such a shock, had given way and snapped off like a pipe-stem, dumping the stage into the creek, where it lay on its side in four feet of water, the two horses still attached to it, though standing up, and apparently uninjured. Owens, drenched to the skin, was trying to detach the traces that held the animals prisoners.

"Hello, Mr. Owens, how did this accident happen?" asked Ed, springing from his seat and then tying his own horse to the fence.

The proprietor of the stage looked up.

"I didn't expect you along so soon, Ed," he said; "but you haven't come any too quick. I don't know how it happened. All I know is that the bridge suddenly gave way and threw the stage, with me on it, into the creek. I never noticed any signs of weakness in the bridge. There must have been a defect on that stringer, or the end has rotted away without any signs. At any rate I'm in a nice pickle."

"I saw a sailboat with three men in it sailing away from here as I came up. It's a wonder they didn't stop to help you out," said Ed.

"They've gone to send on help," replied Owens. "The boat was tied up close by when the bridge went down. The men ran the boat alongside of the stage as you see it and helped me get out the mail bag and the express box, which they

took into the cockpit. They said they'd take them on to the village for me, and send back men and ropes to drag the stage ashore."

"Who were they? You knew them, of course?"

"No, I never saw them before, though one of them, who had a handkerchief bound around his face, as if he had a swollen jaw, looked kind of familiar."

"It may be all right, sir, but if I had been in your shoes I wouldn't have allowed them to take the box and bag away, unless they did it by force. You are responsible for the mail and the express box, and if those chaps ran away with both it would put you in a pretty serious predicament."

"You are right, Ed; I am sorry I didn't make them land them on the shore."

"That's what you ought to have done, for you might have recollected that I was coming on behind and could have taken charge of them for you. I can't drive across this bridge in the shape it's in, but I can wade my team over. This is the spot where the accident happened to me, or rather where Buck Norcross tried to put me out of business. My rig went over by itself that day, but fortunately there were three men on the other side who caught the horse in time, and so no damage resulted. I'll drive down the bank now, cross over, and then see if I can do anything for you," said Ed.

The young expressman got over on the other side without wetting any of his packages, and water barely coming up to within an inch of the bottom of the wagon. It was quite dark by that time. Owens had succeeded in releasing his horses. Ed led them up to the road and tied them beside his own team.

"I don't see that we can do anything with the stage without help," he said. "It will have to be lifted up on its wheels, and then maybe you'll find that one of the axles is broken, or perhaps a wheel. This accident happened at a bad time. The next vehicle coming this way is liable to drive on to the bridge, and go into the creek like you did, before the driver notices that it's broken down. One of us will have to stay here and warn teams of the danger. I suppose I'd better do that, as you are wet, and might catch cold in the cool night air. Take my rig and drive into the village, leading your horses behind. Stop at the Sedgwick house and take Bob up. Send him back here with a couple of red lanterns, and I'll put one at either end the bridge. The help those men promised to send ought to be here by that time. You'd better go to the post-office and express office and see if the bag and the box reached their destinations all right."

Five minutes later Owens started for the village in Ed's vehicle, with his two horses hitched on behind, leaving the young expressman to watch at the scene of the accident.

CHAPTER XIV.—Crooked Work.

Ed walked to the edge of the bridge, lighted a match, knelt down and held the light at the point where the end of the stringer had rested. He made the startling discovery that the heavy beam had been sawed nearly through about a foot from the end of the bank. The weight of

horses and stage had caused the slight remaining portion to snap off in a jagged way, letting the end of the structure down with a run. Ed pondered over the subject without reaching a conclusion until he heard the sound of wheels approaching from the direction of the village. He looked down the road and saw a light wagon coming driven by one man. Ed hailed him as he came up.

"Hello, what do you want?" asked the familiar tones of the village constable.

"Is that you, Mr. Jones?" asked the young expressman.

"Yes. Are you Ed Andrews?"

"You've hit it first guess. Get down, I want to show you something."

The constable alighted.

"You can't drive across the bridge, Mr. Jones," said Ed.

"Why not?"

"Take a look and you'll see why not."

"Why, it's broken down. How did that happen?"

"Some scoundrel sawed the stringer through. The bridge went down with the stage on it. There's the vehicle in the water. Owens got a cold bath, but was not hurt; neither were his horses. I forded the creek myself with my rig, and Owens has gone on to the village in it. I remained here to warn anybody that came along of what was before them."

"Lucky for me you did," said Jones. "I should have driven straight ahead in the darkness, supposing the bridge was all right. You say somebody sawed the stringpiece?"

"I do. Come here and I'll show you."

Ed struck a match and soon convinced the officer of the truth of his statement.

"Who could have done such a dastardly thing as that, and what could have been his object," said the constable.

Ed told the officer the particulars as the reader knows them.

"You say there was a sailboat with three men in it lying here when the trouble occurred?" said Jones.

"That is what Owens told me. I saw such a boat sailing off in the direction of the village as I drove up on the other side."

"And Owens let them carry off the mail bag and the express box?"

"Yes."

"That looks suspicious to me. He was a fool to let men who were strangers to him sail away with such important property. Maybe it was they who brought about the accident in order to get hold of the express box and mail bag. If that turns out to be so I feel sorry for Owens. Both the Government and the express company will hold him strictly accountable, which means he'll be ruined if the articles are not recovered."

"I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head. Whoever sawed the stringer had an object in doing it. I couldn't imagine what that object was till you suggested the mail bag and the express box. Something ought to be done to overhaul that craft right away. The chances are the boat is out on the Atlantic by this time, bound for some nearby port. As soon as I get back to the village I shall call at the post-office. If the bag hasn't arrived, that will convince me it has been

stolen, and the towns all the way to Boston, as well as down the coast, will have to be communicated with. Of course, if the mail bag is gone the express box has gone, too. Here comes another wagon. Maybe it's mine with Bob."

It was his team, with Bob on the seat. Bob brought two red lanterns with him, and after he had expressed his surprise at the condition of the bridge, the lanterns were attached to a piece of wood and stretched across each end of the bridge as a danger signal. The constable had important business in town, and he went on, fording the creek, while Ed and Bob started for the village. Ed drove straight for the post-office, where he found Owens in a great stew over the non-arrival of the mail bag.

"What had I better do?" asked Owens. helplessly.

Ed made several suggestions, and then he and Bob went off to make the deliveries on the wagon, after which they went home, as Ed was mighty hungry by this time. It was too late to call on Dora then, for it was after ten o'clock. However, Ed couldn't resist the temptation to run down to the cottage to see whether she had gone to bed, and, if so, to leave an explanation of his failure to show up that evening. To his great delight he found Dora and her father sitting on the veranda.

"Have you been sitting here all evening" asked Ed.

"Yes."

"Did you notice a sailboat come out of the mouth of the creek yonder and cross the harbor toward the ocean?"

"Yes, I did; about an hour ago. She had a big diamond-shaped patch on her mainsail," replied Dora.

"That was the boat. Which direction did she go?"

"To the north."

"That's toward Boston. She can't have gone a great way, for there is hardly any wind. I'm going over to the bluff, where I jumped in after you that morning, and see if she's in sight. The rascals who got away with the mail bag and express box are aboard of her, and they've got the goods with them. She must be captured or Mr. Owens will be in the soup badly."

Ed started on his mission at once, and in twenty minutes was at the end of the point or bluff. Half a mile away, lying close in shore, was the sailboat. Apparently she was anchored waiting for a slant of wind, for it had fallen a dead calm. At that moment he saw a rowboat put ashore from her. His curiosity was excited, and he started down the bluff in her direction. The boat entered a small cove and was lost to view. Ed started on the run, and in about five minutes reached a clump of bushes at the back of the cove. Looking down into the place he saw the boat moored to the beach. The three men were on shore. While one held up a lighted lantern the other two were industriously digging a hole close to the bluff.

"I wonder if they're going to hide their plunder there?" thought Ed. "Maybe they are afraid that they'll be tracked before the wind comes, and they to put all evidence against them out of sight, intending to return later and remove their

swag. I'll bet that's it. They couldn't do anything that would suit me better."

Ed watched them complete the hole. Then they dragged the express box from the boat and buried it. There was no sign, however, of the mail bag. When they finished their job they entered the boat and returned to their craft.

CHAPTER XV.—Conclusion.

Well, the express box is safe for the present," thought Ed. "I wonder what they have done with the mail bag? I guess they've opened that, rifled the registered letters of what cash was in them, and then sunk the bag overboard. If they have done that they have cooked Mr. Owens' goose, I fear. I wonder if the chap who held the lantern was Buck Norcross? I couldn't see his face, but he looked like that fellow. He's got a nerve, if it is him, to hang around this neighborhood when he's wanted for a serious crime."

No good purpose could be served by remaining there any longer, so Ed started for the village. Ed decided to wake Bob up, tell him what he had discovered, harness up his rig and go down to the cove with his chum, dig up the express box and carry it to the house. On the way he stopped at the constable's home. He woke that official up and told him that he had located the sailboat, with the bridge wreckers aboard.

"It's anchored near the shore about half a mile north of the Point. There is no wind, so the rascals can't make their escape. If you'll scare up two of your deputies, Bob and I will join you at the cove in half an hour or so, and you'll be able to take the crooks into camp. I think one of them is Buck Norcross."

Mr. Jones needed no further encouragement to bestir himself, and Ed went on. Thirty minutes later he and Bob drove back that way in his rig, but the constable had gone. Fifteen minutes later Ed tied his horse to a tree near the cove. The sailboat was still at anchor in the same place, for the calm continued. As Ed pulled a spade and Bob a small coil of rope out of the wagon, they saw another vehicle appearing. Constable Jones was driving, and he had two of his deputies with him. A small rowboat was in the wagon, one end of it projecting out at the rear. The wagon was tied up alongside of Ed's, and the boat carried down into the cove after the young expressman had pointed the anchored sailboat out to the constable.

"What are you going to do with the spade and the rope, Ed?" asked Jones.

"By the time you get back with your prisoners you will learn, Mr. Jones," replied the boy.

The boat was launched and the constable and his deputies started for the sailboat. At the same time Ed started to uncover the buried express box.

"They have reached her, Ed, and are going on board," Bob said.

"And I have reached the top of the express box," replied Ed, shoveling away as fast as he could.

"Let me continue the good work while you take a rest," said Bob.

"The pleasure is yours. Take hold," laughed Ed.

Bob finished the uncovering of the heavy express box, and then the boys put a rope around it and dragged it out of the hole. They both dragged it to the wagon and lifted it in. They returned to the cove in time to meet the constables disembarking their prisoners, one of whom was Buck Norcross.

"Neither the express box nor the mail bag was aboard the sailboat," said Mr. Jones, "and these chaps deny that they know anything about either. However, I discovered a registered envelope addressed to Mr. Bowels, on Main street, so I know they did have the mail bag, and got rid of it somehow. What bothers me is where they have hidden the box."

"That's unnecessary. I've got the box in my wagon."

"Good boy. The express company will probably reward you for recovering it."

The prisoners were loaded on the constable's wagon and taken to the lock-up, while one of the deputies returned to the sailboat to take charge of it. Ed turned the express box over to the constable, and then he and Bob went home. Although he had but a short night's sleep, Ed was up at his usual hour next morning, and on his way to Hampden on schedule time. When he reached the creek, which he had to ford, he found Owens and a couple of men at work extricating the stage. He told the stage proprietor that the express box had been recovered, but that the mail bag had doubtless been rifled and then sunk overboard.

When Ed got back to the village he found the whole place ringing with his praises. That afternoon a representative of the Boston post-office came to Rockhaven to make an investigation, and he handled Owens without gloves. He took the carriage of the mail away from him, and learning that Ed Andrews, the boy who had aided in capturing the rascals, had established a regular express route between the village and town, he told him if he could furnish a satisfactory bond he could have the contract on the same terms as those accorded Owens. Ed took the post-office man around to see Mr. West, and that gentleman willingly agreed to go on Ed's bond for the required amount.

As Mr. West was a responsible Boston merchant, the deal went through, and from that time Ed became the official mail carrier. Owens' bond was forfeited by the Post-office Department, and the stage owner had to make good to his bondsman. The express company sent Ed a present of \$200, took the express carriage from Owens and gave it to the boy, though Ed wrote a letter to the manager of the company, begging him to let Owens keep it. Buck was duly tried and got ten years in State prison. But a great surprise was in store for Ed, the Express Boy. On Sunday morning following the event just narrated, Constable Jones met him near his house and called him into his office.

"I want you to take that pocketbook to your uncle with the explanatory letter I've written. I have no time to see him myself."

"All right, I'll do it," replied Ed; "but I don't expect he will apologize to me for his unjust accusation and for having had me arrested."

"Here it is," said the officer, taking the wallet from the safe.

Ed opened it.

He pulled out a folded sheet of note-paper, strongly creased, and opening it out was surprised and interested to see his father's name signed to it. The note ran as follows:

"DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW ABEL: I have heretofore only sent you money for my son Ed's keep and education. As I am about to embark on a journey of no little peril, I have deemed it wise to sell out all my interests here in Denver and send the money to you for the future benefit of my son. I therefore enclose herewith a draft for \$5,000, made out in your name, but which I expect you to deposit in bank to my son's credit. I will write you at the first chance I get, but do not expect to hear from me for some time, as post-office facilities are not good in the wilds where I am bound. Yours, as ever,

"GEORGE ANDREWS."

Ed went straight to Wave Crest Cottage and showed the letter to Dora's father. The gentleman, after hearing the boy's story of his life with the storekeeper, came to the conclusion that he had better call on Abel White with Ed. He did so.

Abel White wilted and was obliged to own up, for Mr. West declared he would put the case in the hands of Justice Smith. The result was Ed found himself worth over \$6,000. On the first of December he bought out the stage route, for Owens no longer had the heart to run it, especially as there was nothing in it during the winter months.

The Wests came down early that season, and Ed and Dora were much together. At the close of that summer he was engaged to Dora, with her parents's consent. That fall he was appointed agent for the express company at the village, and next spring had so much business that he had to put on another wagon. Although now twenty years of age, he was still called Ed, the Express Boy, and his own route to fortune was an assured success.

Next week's issue will contain "THE STOLEN BONDS; OR, HOW WALL STREET WILL MADE HIS MARK."

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TRUTHFUL JAMES

or

The Boy Who Would Not Drink

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XXI.

"Be a Man, George."

As for Sally Holmes, her face was fairly glowing with pride and admiration. She laughed and chatted with all of her girl friends, and quite a number of elderly men who were her neighbors shook hands with her and tried to say complimentary things to her.

A prominent lawyer from a neighboring town invited Jimmy and his mother to come over to the hotel and dine with him.

"Thank you," said Jimmy. "There are a party of three of us together. This young lady here is a nearby neighbor and came in with mother."

"Oh, Miss Sally Holmes! I know her father well. Come and be my guest also for dinner, Miss Sally," and he took Sally by the hand and started off to the hotel with her.

"Mother, are you coming?" and she turned and looked back at Jimmy's mother.

"Yes, dear."

"Of course," said the lawyer; "but really I didn't know she was acting as your mother."

"Well, I didn't want to address her as mother-in-law just yet," she replied.

"Oh, I understand," he said. "I congratulate both you and Jimmy, and his mother most of all," and he led her straight to the dining-room of the hotel, which was, of course, much overcrowded that day; but the gentleman found no trouble in getting seats for the little party of four, and they laughed and talked as they ate, the gentleman saying to Jimmy that he was destined to be a shining light at the bar.

"Thank you, sir," said Jimmy. "I know little about the law, being just a plain farmer's son and working in the field for the support of my mother."

"Yes, yes. I know that; but your mother certainly will not stand in the way of your future prominence."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Watson. "Judge Wilson has hinted the same thing to me several times; but many of my friends have suggested that he go into the ministry."

"What do you think about that, Jimmy?" the lawyer asked.

"Why, I can't think of it at all. I have not even any religion, and a man without a religion has no business in the pulpit."

The gentleman laughed and said:

"You never said a more truthful thing in your life, Jimmy; but from all that I can learn about you, your life is a sermon in itself, and that was certainly made known to all who listened to you today. An honest, truthful, earnest life is a sermon in itself."

"That's so," put in Sally, who was sitting between the gentleman and Jimmy at the table.

The great crowd which had assembled in the village on the day of George's trial slowly dispersed to their homes in various parts of the county and the village gradually settled down to its accustomed quiet.

George's father was seen with tears trickling down his cheeks while listening to Jimmy's speech, and when he was told that George had promised to never touch a drop of liquor again in his life, he said:

"Yes, of course. That worthless son of mine has made a dozen such promises, and if he isn't drunk again in a week, I don't know the boy."

His wife, George's mother, rebuked him, and told him he ought to try to encourage the boy instead of speaking that way.

"Dear," said he, "I've lost faith in him entirely. He has created a thirst that he can't resist, and you'll find him drunk within a week, or I am no judge of my own blood."

A week passed and George was still struggling hard with the thirst which was almost consuming him.

He went to a well-known physician and told him of the struggle, and he fixed up some sort of medicine which would assuage his thirst for the time being. George followed his directions, and took it, whenever he felt the thirst for strong drink upon him.

Jimmy went over to his house on the next Sunday afternoon and had a long talk with him.

While he was talking with him, Jimmy saw Sally driving by on her way to his mother's home, and he waved his hand to her. She was surprised, and reined up her horse instantly.

"Why, Jimmy," she cried, "I was just going over to your mother's."

"Very well; stop a little while and I'll go with you, with your permission."

"Why, yes, of course," and she drove her horse up to the hitching-post and both George and Jimmy ran out to assist her to alight.

"Jimmy," she said, "I'm really glad to see you and George together. George, you know that I am to be Jimmy's wife, and I am as proud of that fact as any girl in the world would be."

"Yes," said George, "you ought to be. He is a man worth his weight in gold. I am now having the fight of my life, Sally, trying to resist the temptation to get drunk, and I need the sympathy of all my friends to help me."

"That's right, George. Don't depend upon the sympathy or help, though, of any one, but just be a man and say you will win the fight or die."

"That's it. That's it," exclaimed Jimmy.

"Yes, and I will win out or die in the attempt," repeated George.

And Jimmy threw his arms around his neck like the oldtime friend that he had been before all the trouble with George and said:

"Brace up, old fellow. Depend upon yourself rather than on the sympathy of friends."

They stood there talking together for a few minutes, and then George insisted upon Sally's going into the house and seeing his mother.

George's father received her with a warm, hearty welcome and congratulated her upon her

engagament to Jimmy, telling her she ought to be the proudest girl in the county.

"Say the whole world, Mrs. Williams," said Sally, "and that will come nearer the truth."

Now, the Williams family held themselves as rather better people than the family to which Sally belonged.

Of course, Sally never thought of that. In fact, she never regarded it at all, although there had always been some social distinction between them, for the Williamses were considered very wealthy people, and on one occasion, a year or two previous, Sally had mortally offended Mrs. Williams by saying to a neighbor that she was glad she had no drunken vagabond for a brother, and of course an officious friend reported her words and Mrs. Williams became quite angry.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Great Surprise.

Time sped on and, contrary to the expectations of many of the friends of George Williams, he kept his pledge and seemed to have lost all further inclination to drink intoxicating liquors. Some parties had bet money that within a certain length of time he would be drinking again. Belonging to one of the best families in the county, in both a social and financial standpoint, all kinds of invitations were sent to him to attend social functions.

His mother insisted that one of his sisters should accompany him on such visits and keep a strict watch over him to prevent him from yielding to temptation.

The wily enemies of the young man who were trying to tempt him to his ruin conceived the idea of circumventing that scheme, as certain parties withheld invitations to his sisters, and of course the girls did not go.

Sally Holmes volunteered to take the place of George's sister, and Mrs. Williams thanked her and George accepted her as a substitute.

His sister gladly gave way to her, of course; but it was quite a surprise to the schemers when George attended the party with Sally.

"Good heavens, boys," said one of them, "what sort of a girl is Sally Holmes?"

"Why, Sally is all right," said one.

"Well, maybe she is, but how is it? Here she is with George Williams as her escort and Jimmy Watson nowhere to be seen."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed one of them. "That breaks our plans for the evening altogether, for she is more watchful than a bald eagle."

They used other girls in an effort to get her out of the way and to draw George from her side, but failed each time.

Then some of them started a rumor that Sally had deserted Jimmy and accepted George Williams as her lover. Jimmy of course, understood it and so did George.

It happened that way two or three times, and it really did look as though there was something in it and that Sally had really gone back on Jimmy.

One day Sally said to him:

"Jimmy, I don't like this talk that is going all through the county to the effect that I have deserted you."

"Neither do I, dear; but what is the remedy for it? Why not let both of us go to the parson with our mothers and get hitched up together for life?"

"All right," said Sally. "Then we can attend all the parties with George," and so the arrangements were made.

George Williams agreed to act as best man for Jimmy, and a day was set for them and their friends to assemble at the little church and see them married. There was no secrecy about the affair, but Sally had arranged a plan to give a great surprise not only to George's family, but to hers and Jimmy's likewise.

Sally had a friend named Emma Hitchcock, whom she knew to be very much in love with George, and George himself had a secret liking for her.

Emma had made a confidante of Sally, and, of course, she knew all about how each one felt toward the other.

Jimmy had talked with George and learned his feelings toward the Hitchcock girl.

"Jimmy," said George, "if Emma could be persuaded to stand up with us and be married, I would be about as happy as you are."

"That's all right, George. Emma is all right. She wouldn't say no if you asked her. She and Sally are confidantes and it is not necessary for me to say anything more. If you will only speak to Emma you will find that she is all right. She'll be over to see Sally tomorrow afternoon, and I'll post Sally to make things easy for you. Of course, it would be a very unusual thing for a girl to make up her mind upon such short notice, but you know how Sally is. I believe that she can persuade her to enter into the plot to surprise the whole community," he said.

"All right; go ahead, Jimmy, I'll be the most grateful fellow you ever saw if you can persuade the parson to enter into the plot, and as soon as you and Sally are tied up hard and fast to turn us and serve us likewise."

Jimmy entered into the scheme most enthusiastically and so did Sally as soon as Jimmy mentioned the matter to her. They both entered a buggy and drove to the parson's residence, and he entered into the scheme eagerly.

The next day, in the afternoon, George went to the home of Sally, and there met Jimmy and his intended, when Emma came over, little dreaming what was in store for her.

Sally had arranged the meeting in a timely manner, and though George had been notified that Emma really loved him, somehow or other his heart failed him, and after he and Emma had sat holding each other's hands for nearly an hour, he had not yet popped the question.

Sally got out of patience and went into the little parlor where they were sitting and blurted out:

"George Williams, I'm out of all patience with you, and you, too, Emma Hitchcock."

"Why, what have I done, Sally?" asked Emma in no little surprise.

"You've done nothing, and that is what is the trouble. George is just dead in love with you and wants you to be his wife, and you can't see it. Now, George, kiss her and tell her how much you love her."

(To be continued.)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, JUNE 15, 1928

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

TO STOP LOW FLYING

Hartford aviation authorities were expected to take steps to prevent low flying over the city after a court session was interrupted by the roar of plane motors recently.

CHEMICAL LIFE BELT INVENTED BY YOUTH

An eighteen-year-old boy, Michael Kurnievich, has invented a life-saving belt which a commission of technical experts here after some tests consider superior to any hitherto available.

The belt is a narrow waterproof and gas-proof tube, with the buckle in the form of a box containing certain chemicals. Upon contact with water the chemicals generate a gas which expands the tube sufficiently to support the body in the water.

SPIDER MONKEY IN WEB

Chico, Spider Monkey in the Bronx Zoo, is in solitary confinement and he'll stay there until his manners improve.

He was alone for two years and became despondent. Recently the authorities brought two spider monkeys to the zoo to keep Chico company. He was nice to the newcomers until recently when he began teasing them, pulling their tails and chasing them from one part of the cage to another.

Keeper George Palmer was bit and scratched when he tried to teach Chico his manners.

SCHOOLS TOO SMALL FOR GRADUATIONS

Because of the many large classes that are to graduate from the city's public schools this June, making it necessary for some schools to hold their commencement exercises in auditoriums in other than public school buildings, Superintendent of Schools William J. O'Shea notified the school principals of the procedure to be followed in ap-

plying for official sanction to use outside auditoriums.

The superintendent ruled that application for permission to hold exercises outside of any school building should not be made where an adequate auditorium is available either in the school or in an accessible neighboring school.

Where no suitable school auditorium is available the Building Bureau to make an adequate in-permission to use an outside auditorium with their district superintendents at least five weeks before the date of the graduate exercises to enable the Building Bureau to make an adequate investigation, as a certificate of safety is required.

SUBWAYS GET \$10,000 A YEAR FOR THEIR CLEAN WASTE PAPER

Cleaning New York's many miles of subways is a gigantic task. Day and night men are working through the tunnels and in the stations, picking up newspapers and candy wrappers and sweeping station platforms. Pick-up men, armed with sacks and sticks with a sharp iron prong attached, work the tunnels. Weekdays they pursue the more traveled stretches; Sundays the further reaches are cleaned.

Although approximately \$10,000 a year is obtained from the sale of "clean" waste papers, this sum is small in proportion to the amount of money expended to keep the systems clean. The method is for the "clean-up" car to cover certain sections each night. At each station the waste paper is piled on this car and from there delivered to the paper merchants.

Stations are more difficult than the tracks to keep clean, and porters are always working at this job. A Board of Health ruling says that all sweeping to be done must be "dry," and to prevent dust wet sawdust is used. Station walls are washed quite often, but tunnel walls cannot be scrubbed, as water coming in contact with any of the cables or third rails would cause a short circuit.

A GOOD STICKER

They call him Label because he sticks so close to the bottle!—Wash. & Lee Mink.

A SAD STORY

Chief Webfoot: Yea, me old woman she smothered to death between two blankets.

Farmer: Died in the wool, eh?—Penn State Froth.

COAL WEATHER COMING

Terry: Have you laid in your Winter's supply of coal?

Jerry: I've got that slated for next week.

OH, HOW CLEVAH, DOCTOR!

Woman to Dietician Expert: And Doctor, do you think cranberries are healthy?

Doctor: I've never heard one complain.—Mugwump.

PLEASE SERVE TOWELS

"I like to watch a fat man sneeze. They always sneeze all over."

"Yes. I have stood in front of them, too."—Webfoot.

A Woman Detective

By Alexander Armstrong

Mary Hardy was impatiently awaiting her husband's return. It was now nearing the hour of eight, for the clock had struck the half hour some few minutes since.

She was fully dressed, had on her cloak and hat, and, it may be as well to add, a frown, for her husband was disappointing her. They were to go to the theater that night and in her hand she held the tickets, and the carriage stood waiting at the door.

"I'll wait until ten minutes of eight, and then if he isn't here you must go with me, Joe," she said to her brother, who had chanced to drop in a few minutes before.

Ten minutes of eight arrived.

James Hardy had not yet come.

"I'll wait no longer," said Mary Hardy in a petulant tone. "Come, Joe."

The Hardys lived in Twentieth street, near Fifth avenue, up which thoroughfare the carriage went speeding.

In the center of the plaza, formed by the intersection of Fifth avenue and Broadway, stands a gas-lamp with half a dozen or more jets, which lights up the street very brilliantly for some feet on either side of it.

As Mrs. Hardy's carriage approached this, going uptown, another carriage passed when exactly in front of the lights.

In the interior of the latter were a man and a woman.

Something about the appearance of the former caused Mrs. Hardy to look more sharply at him.

At best the glance was but a brief one, so rapidly did the carriages pass. But it was long enough for Mrs. Hardy to make certain of a distressing fact—that the man in the other carriage was her husband.

Sinking back among the cushions, she uttered a deep moan of sorrow.

"What's the matter, sis?" inquired her brother, in an anxious tone.

"Matter?" and she clutched her heart with her hand in an agonized manner. "My husband was in that carriage which just passed us, and he had a woman with him. It is all plain now why he did not come after me. He no longer loves me—oh! James—James—you have broken my heart!" wailed the poor wife.

"Hush! Would you grieve over a man who can forget his respectability, his duty to yourself and your children? It is an insult to you, and as such you should regard and as such resent it."

In a few minutes her lips were firmly set, and her face was hard and cold, while her eyes flashed with anger. Though she loved her husband dearly, she was now in a rage with him.

At the theater she saw many whom she knew, and she smiled, and laughed, and gayly spoke to them, and not one guessed that a volcano of passion was hidden by that fair exterior.

When it was finished the carriage took her home. Her brother would have entered with her, but she said:

"You go home, Joe. I am firm now, and will not be weak when I meet my husband."

She entered the house. Her husband had not yet returned.

After what she had seen she hardly expected him until very late.

"Lodge meetings, eh?" as she put on a loose wrapper and sat down to await his return. "I now know the lodge meetings he attends."

She planned out what she was to say, and the tone in which it was to be said, nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

One! Just one o'clock. He had not yet returned.

"The villain!" she muttered. "I'll make him rue this night's work."

Two! Still James Hardy was absent. She was boiling over with rage now; every nerve was strained and tense; face and neck were scarlet with suppressed passion.

Three! Why did he not come? A lurking fear began to play hide-and-seek with the anger in her eyes.

Four! Her eyes were moist now.

"How could you do such a thing?" she moaned. "Husband—James—where are you?"

Six! It was long after daylight now, but not yet had he returned. Her tears and prayers had not drawn him to her side. She was now in an agony of fear.

Eight! The breakfast-bell rang, and she heard her children go down to the dining-room. But she could not eat anything, there was no need of her going down to the table.

A servant came up, and, forcing herself to be calm, Mrs. Hardy told her that she would not go down this morning. Nor would Mr. Hardy be to breakfast. He had been detained out overnight, and might not be home for some little time yet.

Night fell again, but without having heard aught of her husband. Her brother came, and, looking grave when he heard her story, he determined to call in the assistance of the police. He went to headquarters, and the case was placed in my hands.

I could not help feeling sorry for the suffering and unstrung lady when her brother took me to the house.

"You will keep our secret, if it should come out all right?" she said earnestly, as she laid a hand on my arm, and fastened her red-rimmed eyes on my face.

"It is my duty to do that!"

"And you will find him for me?"

"If it is possible."

"And when you do," she shuddered a little, "I—I don't want to know anything about it if it attaches anything wrong to my husband."

"Would you know this woman if you saw her?" I inquired.

"Know her?" and I could see her eyes flash. "I should know her wherever or whenever I met her."

"I was glad of this, for it might be of assistance, since I supposed from what she said that the woman was a gay one, and I knew of none answering her description.

With the data in my possession, which she had furnished, I went to work at once.

Day after day the result was the same, and I had only the same report of failure to make

when I called every night to see Mrs. Hardy. The lady's grief had assumed a new phase. Instead of moaning, and sobbing, and crying, she was now hard and calm and self-possessed—and, as I was made aware, decidedly irritable.

"You don't want to find him, perhaps," she sneered. "I am now going to see what I can do."

"You?" I gasped, in surprise.

"Yes, I," and her eyes glittered so strangely that I looked at her more closely than I had before done.

Instantly I saw what had happened. Although not absolutely crazed by the loss of her husband, her mind was so completely upset that the step from her present condition to absolute insanity would have been a very short one.

"A good idea," I presently returned, falling in with her whim. "You would know this woman if you saw her, and by fastening her down we may be able to get at the truth."

I left the house in a brown study. It was just as well that I should go home and obtain a good night's rest. After the time that had elapsed it was unlikely that I could do James Hardy any good, and after all said and done, the only clew that could be obtained to the truth of his mysterious disappearance would be through the woman with whom he had been seen, and whom I had vainly tried to run to earth.

The next morning I was in hiding near the Hardy residence.

About ten o'clock Mrs. Hardy emerged. Without knowing it she passed within a very few feet of me, and I saw that her eyes were very wild-looking. When she had passed I followed her, and never for one minute lost sight of her. Up and down Broadway she walked, never pausing, as tireless as though every muscle was made of steel. Hour after hour she continued this, and looked as fresh as ever, while I felt myself to be completely fagged out.

She still walked on—and on—never pausing to rest, nor to obtain food, nor ever desisted until night began to fall. And during all this time she never passed a woman into whose face she did not keenly peer, causing many a one of them to start back, frightened by the wildness and piercing expression of her brilliantly sparkling eyes.

The next day she came forth again, and again I followed her.

Up and down, to and fro—to and fro, up and down—I followed at her heels, block after block, hour after hour.

Tired and weary, I plodded after her, wishing she would give up and go home. But she evidently had no intention of doing so. She turned off of Broadway into one of the side streets.

Again I followed in her wake.

I was disgusted, and little thought at that moment that in less than ten minutes the mystery would be solved. But it was.

Suddenly Mrs. Hardy started, as a bloodhound might at the instant of finding spoor (the scent of a negro), and, glancing ahead, I saw two women, elegantly dressed, just leaving a small house.

Mrs. Hardy had caught sight of them as they emerged from the door, and was now hurrying toward them, her frame trembling with excite-

ment, her face expressing a desire to rend one of these women limb from limb.

By the time they reached the foot of the steps, Mrs. Hardy was within a few feet of them.

With a bound she was in front of them, and then she fiercely seized the tallest one by the wrist, and, bending forward, hissed:

"You beautiful demon, where is my husband? Where is he, I say? Ha! you start, you grow pale. Demon, you have murdered him!"

The woman certainly had grown pale, was as white as a corpse.

She suddenly struck Mrs. Hardy a violent blow in the face, and, breaking loose, broke into a run, luckily coming in my direction.

I caught her, and a policeman who chanced to be in sight captured the second female, whom I had recognized as a hard case.

Leaving them at the station-house, whither Mrs. Hardy had followed us, I took four policemen and returned to the house. I begged Mrs. Hardy to remain behind, but she would not do so.

Had our character been guessed, access to the house would not have easily been obtained. As it was, the door was opened incautiously, and I took good care that it should not be shut in our faces.

We rushed in.

The negro man who opened the door was taken charge of at once.

Dashing into the parlor, as it was opened by some one anxious to learn what the fuss was about, I collared a man whom I recognized at a glance.

"George Tyner, you are my prisoner!" I sternly said, drawing my revolver and covering him.

He was cornered, and dared not attempt to resist when the "darbies" were slipped on his wrists.

Beyond these two whom we now had in custody, there was no one in the house—that is, no other living person, although there was a dead one.

In the cellar we found the dead body of James Hardy, who had been murdered.

Neither Tyner nor his wife (the woman was really his wife) would ever give a word of explanation, although the circumstantial evidence was strong enough to send him to the gallows and her to prison for life.

But what seems most probable is that James Hardy had seen this beautiful fiend, and had been enticed into speaking to her some time during the afternoon. A visit had been paid to some saloon, where drinks had been taken, and she had found an opportunity to give him some baleful drug in a glass of wine.

Forgetful of his wife, of his engagement to go with her to a theater, he had entered a carriage and been driven to her house, where Tyner was lying in wait, as the spider in his net waits for the unwary fly.

Once inside of the house Hardy had been commanded to "shell out."

He had refused, and drawn a revolver—he always carried one—to protect himself. At once Tyner had drawn and shot him down.

I never told Mrs. Hardy the probable reasons leading to her husband's violent death, and she mourns him as one who would do no wrong act.

She has recovered from the partial derangement to which I alluded, lives wrapped up in her children, and never on any account alludes to herself as A Woman Detective.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

FOREST FIRES BURN AGAIN

A fresh outbreak of small fires in various sections of the State has been reported to the State Department of Forests and Waters. A fire in Lycoming County was brought under control after burning over several hundred acres.

PLAN OCEAN SKIPPING

The next Germany transatlantic flight will be via Lisbon and the Azores to New York, with Johann Ristic and Herr Von Bentheim and possibly a third flier, it was reported recently.

Miss Lilly Dillenz, Austrian actress, will not participate in it.

A NEW ENGLAND BEAR STORY

Wherever there are bears in New England, spring finds them emerging from their period of hibernation, crawling out of the dens where they "holed up" for the winter. They are ravenously hungry and for the first week or two after their long sleep they think of little save food. In a single week in the spring twenty bears were shot within two miles of Boston, if we may believe the history of Roxbury. But the year was 1728, not 1928!

SURPASSED BY GARY ART SALE AS AN AUCTION RECORD

While the sale at Christie's of the Holford collection undoubtedly sets a record for high prices paid in a limited time of selling, it is not an auction record. The recent sale of Elbert H. Gary's art treasures brought a total of \$2,316,708—an American auction record for a single painting being made in Sir Joseph Duveen's purchase of Gainsborough's "The Harvest Wagon" for \$360,000.

WEATHER DELAYS U. S. RESCUE PLANES

A dispatch to the Montreal Star said recently that unfavorable weather was preventing the two United States Army planes en route to Greenly Island, from taking off from St. George's, Newfoundland, where they arrived recently from Pictou, N. S.

It was raining and cloudy at St. George's, the dispatch said, with a northwest wind and it was not known when the aviators would start on the last lap of their trip to where the stranded trans-Atlantic plane Bremen lies.

SAME MATERIAL IS EMPLOYED IN CONCRETE AND COSMETICS

Diatomaceous earth from Carlin, Elko County, is finding its way to Cape Town, South Africa, where it is reground and used for polishing diamonds. The diatomaceous earth is used to take off the haze that is left on the diamond before polishing, and the Carlin product has been found quite effective.

Through British companies the Carlin plant has received inquiries from New Zealand, Africa

and Germany concerning its product. The plant, however, depends largely on the American market. Its fine mesh material is used principally in the manufacture of cosmetics or for fine concrete products. The coarser product is used largely as linings for furnaces.

NOW A SHOWER FOR THE BRIDEGROOM-TO-BE

Men and women busily swap customs in these spacious days of sex equality. A "smoker" for a bride is a not unheard of social event, and now a "shower" for a bridegroom is reported. The shower took place in what is known as "the metropolitan area."

Ten male friends of the benedict-to-be gathered around him on a prearranged night, surprising him in the customary fashion, all of them with gifts supposedly for his future state of domesticity. Among these were a house coat, suspenders, a humidor, cigars, slippers and a hip flask! Perhaps the most useful present of all was a household kit containing tools for the inevitable small repair jobs.

PEKINESE PUP SENT BY MEXICAN AIRMAIL

A Pekinese puppy named Guerita was airmailed from Mexico City to Tampico. The stamps were stuck to a tag on her collar. Guerita had a nice trip. She was the first dog ever to fly anywhere in Mexico.

Mexico's first air-mail service was recently established between Mexico City, Tuxpan and Tampico, with one plane daily each way. Passengers also are carried. The service, after a few weeks of operation, is so popular it is being doubled. Two planes are now scheduled each way daily.

Other services, from the capital to the American border to connect with United States air-mail routes, and from Mexico City to other interior points, are projected.

SAVED CHILDREN FROM TRAINS, GET MEDALS FROM COOLIDGE

President Coolidge has granted medals of honor to two persons who have performed outstanding feats of bravery in saving lives on railroads.

One of the medals was received by Miss Jessie Knight of Mattoon, Ill., who got three children out of the way of a "Big Four" train on July 27, 1927, at that town. Miss Knight crossed the track ahead of a locomotive to pull the children off the main line where another train was approaching.

The second medal went to Charles W. Van Buren, stationmaster at Jackson, Miss., an employe of the Illinois Central. A small child stumbled on the rails just ahead of an approaching train, and Van Buren jumped to the tracks, threw the child to safety and managed to escape himself with only slight injury as the locomotive hit him. The rescue occurred September 6, 1926.

The awards were made on recommendation of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

CURRENT NEWS

HUGE CLOCK WITH MAN'S FACE TELLS TIME FOR GERMAN CITY

This home town of Otto Peltzer, the great runner, has one of the most unusual tower clocks in Germany.

In the center of its huge dial there is the terrifying face of a bearded man who every second rolls his eyes from right to left like a bogey man. In his opened mouth he holds a metal plate on which the day of the month is recorded.

The clock adorns the tower of the castle once inhabited by the Dukes of Pomerania, and now devoted to municipal purposes. It bears the inscription "1736."

FLEA TALKS IN CODE

A talking flea, that communicates with whom it may be tapping out signals in a sort of simple Morse code against its head with its powerful legs, is promised in the forthcoming flea circus by Professor Vittorio Pirelli.

It is claimed that under microscopic examination the flea, which is a female, is observed to use two taps for "no" and one for "yes." But through its act the flea is said to signal "no" repeatedly if it disapproves of suggestions made by prodding it with a knitting needle.

The flea is said to try vainly, and with apparent anger, to communicate with other fleas that do not seem to get the idea.

BARD THRILLS GENE

Professor William Lyon Phelps has received a letter of appreciation from Gene Tunney for the autographed set of Shakespeare presented the boxer after his recent talk at Yale.

The autographs were of the students who heard Tunney speak.

"Dear Professor Billy," wrote the boxer, "there comes to every man during his life a few occasions when word, the medium of expression, are altogether inadequate to convey the deep feelings in his heart.

"I am now experiencing one of these occasions. Nothing has ever surprised me more or touched me deeper than the receipt of the lovely set of Shakespeare sent by the boys of your Shakespeare class."

BILL TO REDISTRICT U. S. FOR CONGRESS MEETS FIGHT

The House plunged into another old controversy recently as it took up the Fenn bill to reapportion the membership of Congress.

The bill would provide a method for reapportioning the membership on the basis of the 1930 census, and once every ten years thereafter, holding the number of Representatives to the present figure—435.

It came under fire as soon as it reached the floor. It was attacked by half a dozen members as a "mere legislative gesture" and as "anticipatory" legislation.

Representative Bankhead (D., Ala.) argued that since Congress had failed to obey the constitutional reapportionment mandate for eight years it might as well wait two more years to get information upon which to act.

Representative Burton (R., O.) defended the legislation, declaring Congress had subjected itself to reproach because it did not reapportion its membership after the last census.

The same difficulty will be encountered in 1930 as was met in 1920, he contended, asserting that in previous reapportionments the question always had arisen whether the number of Representatives should not be increased, instead of reducing the number of Representatives from some States.

NEW SUBWAY SHOULD UNCOVER RELICS OF DUTCH NEW YORK

After lying buried for nearly three centuries one of the most interesting sections of New York is about to be unearthed. A unique opportunity to recover relics of the earliest settlement on Manhattan Island will be afforded by the excavations to be made in Broad Street for the new subway. A canal once extended along the line of the present thoroughfare, lined on either side with rows of houses. When this waterway was filled in, late in the seventeenth century, many relics were probably covered over. Since the excavations for the subway will be carried to a depth of thirty-five feet the lowest levels of New Amsterdam will be revealed.

Representatives of the Field Exploration Committee of the New York Historical Society will watch the excavation work, desk room and storage space having been obtained in the contractor's office. Any objects recovered will be carefully cleaned and studied.

The earliest maps of lower Manhattan Island indicate that a stream originally started from a spring at the present intersection of Broad and Wall Streets and flowed along the present line of Broad Street, emptying into the East River. It is supposed that the open space on the northwest corner of Broad and Wall streets opposite the Treasury Building was at one time a marsh or pond, and was therefore not built upon for many years. The old stream was widened into a canal somewhere about 1650. The banks were marked with piling and a double line of old Dutch buildings rose on either side. Here, it is said, was centred the busiest life of the town.

The subway excavation will entail the digging up of Broad Street between Exchange Place and Water Street. A study of the old maps indicates that the old Dutch canal lay within these limits. The canal was filled in about the year 1690. When the present subway was built in the lower section of Manhattan Island it failed to reveal any relics of New Amsterdam. The excavations did not chance to cross a busy part of the old village, or it passed too deep below the surface. The new subway excavations will afford antiquarians the opportunity they have been looking forward to for a generation.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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